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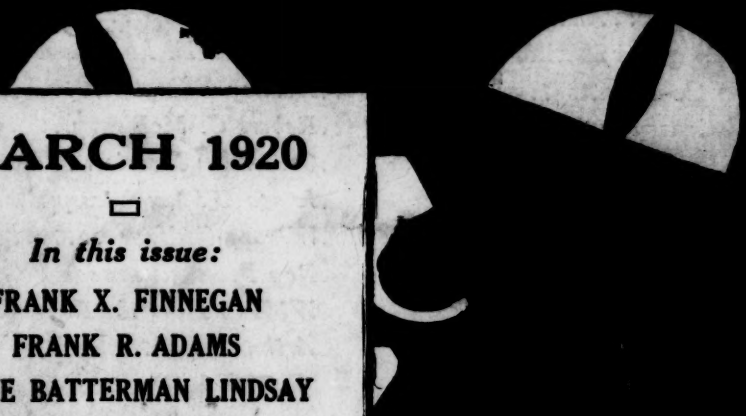
In This Issue: Two Prize Contests—$7500.00 In All

The Black Cat

ESTABLISHED 1895



MARCH 1920

In this issue:

FRANK X. FINNEGAN
FRANK R. ADAMS
ANNIE BATTERMAN LINDSAY
ELWOOD BROWN
MARION HILL
MARY CAROLYN DAVIES
MICHAEL WHITE
CRITTENDEN MARRIOTT
and stories by 11 others

20 CENTS

THE BLACK CAT MAGAZINE, INC., *Publishers*
229 WEST 28TH STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.

The Black Cat

Established 1895

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IN CASH PRIZES

for the Best Novelettes and Short Stories

Many writers whose stories are most in demand by magazine editors to-day started their careers by writing stories for the BLACK CAT and taking part in the old prize story contests that made the BLACK CAT famous. For a quarter of a century the BLACK CAT has been the "open door" to new writers; for a quarter of a century it has devoted itself exclusively to the advancement of short-story writing.

Among those who have had their first stories published in the BLACK CAT, or have been competitors in previous contests, are:

Jack London
Rupert Hughes
Alice Hegan Rice
Harry Stilwell Edwards
Will N. Harben
Geraldine Bonner
Sewell Ford
Holman Day
Cleveland Moffett
Juliet Wilbor Tompkins
Ellis Parker Butler
Susan Glaspell
James Francis Dwyer
Michael White
Ida M. Evans
Hapsburg Liebe
William Hamilton Osborne
William J. Neidig
Octavus Roy Cohen
Frank X. Finnegan
Robert W. Sneddon

In this issue the publishers announce the conditions of two prize story contests, both now open.

The $2,500 Novelette Contest is something new for the BLACK CAT, as the magazine has never published novelettes. The announcement of this contest (see page 2) marks a change of policy and is another forward step in the magazine's career.

The $5,000 Short-Story Contest (see pages 125-128) was announced last month, and is now well under way. Publication of entries in this contest will begin in an early issue.

The two contests are entirely separate, but the conditions are the same with two exceptions.

The publishers wish particularly to call attention to Article 6 of the Conditions, which provides for payment at regular rates, in addition to the prize awards, for all stories submitted in the contest and found to be acceptable for publication.

$2,500.00

IN CASH PRIZES

for the Best Plot-and-Action NOVELETTES

THE PRIZES ARE:

1st Prize	**$1000**	**3rd Prize**	**$500**
2nd "	**750**	**4th "**	**250**

CONDITIONS:

The conditions of this contest are the same as those governing the short-story contest (see pages 125-128) with two exceptions: (1) novelettes may range in length from 10,000 to 25,000 words; (2) the competition will close August 31st, 1920.

Manuscripts should be addressed "The Black Cat Magazine, Inc., 229 West 28th Street, New York, N. Y.," and envelopes or wrappers should be plainly marked "Prize Contest." Stories fulfilling the conditions of the contest and found to be acceptable for publication in the BLACK CAT will be paid for at regular rates on acceptance. Publication of these stories will begin as soon as possible, and within sixty days of the closing date of the contest awards will be announced in the BLACK CAT and paid in cash.

The publishers cannot emphasize too strongly the necessity for stories of plot and action. The prize winners will be the plot builders; they will be the writers who succeed in packing into 25,000 words or less dramatic and conflicting incidents and actions occurring in the shortest possible time in the lives of the fewest possible characters—the whole developed to a powerful climax and a reasonable and satisfying conclusion.

Write of present-day life, and avoid the morbid, gruesome, supernatural and unpleasantly tragic.

WHEN THE OLD GAME CALLS

By FRANK X. FINNEGAN

CAPTAIN JIMMIE LAVERTY, chief of the Red Sox Juniors, rounded the corner at Deist's grocery store with a heavy frown puckering his youthful brow.

The intangible odors of spring rode the air. Sparrows quarreled in the dust along the curb under the sunshine and balmy breezes blew Jimmie's shock of red hair awry. But the heart of the captain responded to none of these vernal stirrings. It lay heavy within his breast and it was a doleful hail he addressed to Skeets Weber, his first baseman, emerging from Deist's side door, laden with butter and dried herrings.

"Hey, Skeets! Hold on a minute!" he called. "I want to talk to you. What we goin' to do for a pitcher to-morrow?"

His able lieutenant nearly dropped the Weber family's luncheon in his start of amazement.

"A pitcher? Ain't Pipes goin' to pitch for us?" he asked.

"Ah, where you been? Ain't you heard about Pipes?" Captain Laverty retorted. "He can't be let out o' his house for a week—maybe for two. He's got the mumps!"

Skeets stared unbelievingly for a few seconds and then the weight of this calamity descended upon him like a pall. The next afternoon was marked out in the sporting calendar of the neighborhood for the momentous ball game in which the Red Sox Juniors, champions for many blocks in every direction from Deist's corner, were to meet the Actives, the despised enemy from across the railroad tracks.

Pipes Hogan had twirled his team to a dozen victories and his form on the slab promised a continuation of that whirlwind record. And now, with the weight of worlds resting upon his slender shoulders, Pipes had fallen down on them. Mumps!

"Are you sure it's mumps?" Skeets asked hopefully. "You know he's always got somethin' the matter with his pipes. That's why they call him that. Maybe it's only a little sore throat or somethin' that might be well by to-morrow."

Jimmie rested his shoulders against Mr. Deist's red brick wall and dug at the pavement gloomily with a worn shoe.

"Nothin' doin'," he returned. "Don't Marty Gleichner live next door to him an' ain't he in his room in school? Well, Marty had ought to know what he's got! Marty had to bring a note off of Pipes's mother to their teacher, an' o' course he read it, an' it said Pipes has got the mumps an' the doctor says he can't go out for a couple o' weeks cause it's catchin'. Ain't that the limit for hard luck?"

The first-baseman shifted his smoked herrings so their delicate aroma would more thoroughly permeate the pound of butter, and grinned amiably.

"What d'ye mean, hard luck?" he asked. "He don't have to go to school, an' mumps don't hurt so much. I've had 'em on one side already."

"Ah, I don't mean for *him!*" Captain Laverty retorted with becoming scorn. "I'm talkin' about the ball club! Don't

it leave us flat without a pitcher. Who'm I goin' to put in against them Actives? You know yourself they got a bunch o' sluggers waitin' for us!"

"Marty can pitch some," Skeets observed, after grave consideration of the crisis. Jimmie's mop of red hair came up with a jerk as he leveled his gaze upon his first baseman.

"Marty Gleichner only *thinks* he can!" he returned. "He said so to me when he was tellin' me about Pipes. He says he doesn't know nobody that could go on the slab unless it's him! Say, I can see that bird workin' against them guys from across the track! We'd all have our shoes worn out chasin' that ball! He's lucky if I let him go in the game an' play short!"

"It's fierce, ain't it?" Weber admitted wistfully. "What are we goin' to do?"

"That's what I'm askin' you," the captain returned. "Gee! I can't think of everything! It wouldn't be so bad if we wasn't going' to play them hicks for money. I had hard enough work gettin' that Slovak captain o' theirs to promise they'd dig up ten cents a man an' twenty himself, the same as we're doin'. An' now it looks like we're goin' to hand 'em that coin without a decent battle for it. Aw, it makes me tired!"

Signs of post-luncheon activity on the part of the mechanics employed on a new building across the street suddenly awakened Skeets to a realization of the responsibilities that rested upon him as purveyor of family supplies.

"Say, I got to get home with this stuff, Jim. They're waitin' to eat, an' my mother'll be on the war-path. I'll try to think of somethin' this afternoon. See you after school. So long."

"So long," Captain Laverty mournfully echoed, but the first baseman had taken a few hurried homeward steps when he was halted by another hail from Jimmie.

"Say, Skeets! I was thinkin'—gee! it'ud be tough—"

Weber turned expectantly, but his captain hesitated.

"What would?" Skeets demanded.

"Why, if—if Pipes should die—or anything—"

"Aw, you don't die with mumps," Weber cheerfully rejoined. "You're thinkin' of ammonia." And he hastened on his way, leaving his pensive associate in a maze of doubts and worries.

Progress in the pursuit of education that afternoon on the part of those Red Sox Juniors to whom the impending catastrophe had been revealed was so slight that it could be recorded as "trace." The emergency confronting the team took precedence over the principal products of the Middle Atlantic States, and Jimmie Laverty aroused hilarious enthusiasm by declaring that Washington's soldiers at Valley Forge suffered severely from mumps.

It may be that the concentration of so many youthful minds upon one burning topic was not without its psychological effect, for by the time school was over a great thought had come to the captain —an idea fraught with such tremendous dangers and possibilities that he did not dare reveal it to the entire batting order of the ball club. Snitching was possible, and therefore Jimmie guarded his secret until he had corralled Skeets Weber and Tub Harris in the Laverty barn. Tub was admitted to the circle because of his imposing girth and strength that belied his tender twelve years.

"Well, we're up against it about Pipes, all right," Skeets volunteered when he had found Captain Laverty adamant against his volley of questions as to what was in the wind. "I fairied over to the Hogans' house on my way to school an' seen his sister at the window. They won't even let her go to school until he's all well. He's got 'em on both sides an' she says he can't come out o' the house for maybe two weeks."

Tub rolled his eyes slowly from one to the other of his nervous companions

and heaved a portly sigh as he settled back against the wall on a saw-horse.

"Shucks! Mumps ain't nothin'!" he declared. "I've had 'em. I've had most everything. I don't see what the teachers and everybody are so scared of mumps for!"

Jimmie impatiently waved the pathological discussion aside. He was for counsel and action on the matter in hand.

"You didn't see Pipes, did you?" he demanded.

"What do you think—that they'd let anybody *talk* to him while he's quarryteened?" Skeets returned. "I'm lucky Mrs. Hogan didn't see me talkin' to Mary, an' give me a shag away from the house!"

"Well, one of us has got to talk to him," the captain announced. "That's what I brought you fellows here to tell you."

"What d'ye mean, talk to him? What for?"

The questions came breathlessly from the first baseman, and even Tub developed enough sudden interest to sit up straight and stare.

"Pipes has got to pitch that game for us to-morrow—there's nothin' else to it!" Jimmie declared. "It's up to us fellows to put it over some way. Now, how we goin' to do it?"

The secret was out and the two confidants could only gaze in reverent admiration at their intrepid leader. They were dazzled by the brilliance of his suggestion.

"Do you mean we're goin' to sneak Pipes out o' his house, mumps an' all, to play ball to-morrow?" queried Tub.

Captain Laverty nodded with decision.

"Sure. We got to do it," he declared. "Ain't we been tryin' to get this game on with them Actives since last year? An' didn't we challenge 'em for a dollar a side? Hogan is the only pitcher we've got that they can't lam all over the lot. But mumps needn't keep him from twirlin' his reg'lar game! They're only a swellin' in his neck. That don't bother his arms any, does it?"

The captain's argument was unanswerable. The possibilities of the idea were tremendous and alluring.

"That's right, Jim," the first baseman agreed.

"Pipes would do it all right if we could get to him," Tub suggested.

"Then we've got to frame up some way o' reachin' him without his folks gettin' onto us," Jimmie declared. "His bedroom is upstairs in the back. What's the matter with one of us gettin' up on the roof o' their summer kitchen an' givin' Pipes a hand to get out the window an' beat it?"

A silence descended upon his wide-eyed associates for a moment. The daring suggestion was quite like their red-headed captain, yet they were awed by the boldness of it.

"I could do that!" Tub finally breathed.

"That's what I was thinkin'," Captain Laverty admitted.

"S'pose his mother misses him?" the pessimistic Skeets suggested. Jimmie turned on him wrathfully.

"S'pos'n she does! She won't know where he is till the game is over, will she?" he demanded. "An' after we've trimmed them Actives, the whole bunch can go home with him an' tell her how it wasn't his fault. Ain't that all right?"

"Sure. She ought to be satisfied all right so long's it wasn't his fault," Tub declared. "Let's do it!"

The captain folded his arms and carefully studied Tub's capable-looking dimensions. They were on the threshold of a venture not lightly to be undertaken and he wanted to be sure of his man.

"Are you game to climb up on that roof an' tell Pipes what we're goin' to put across an' help him to get down?" he demanded.

"Sure I am—if you fellows'll be scoutin' around to give me the whistle if any-

body's comin' or anything," the redoubtable member of the trio returned.

"All right. You're on," Jimmie declared, and the compact was sealed. He took a step toward the barred door. "Oh, I nearly forgot," he said. "Nobody says a word about this on the outside o' this barn. Understand? It's got to be kept secret, an' only us three are in on it."

"That's me," Tub acquiesced. "Nothin' spoken, nothin' broken."

"Cross your heart!" the captain ordered. His plump subordinate solemnly obeyed and Skeets hastened to enroll himself by the same rite.

"Nothin' spoken, nothin' broken, cross my heart!" he declared.

"All right. Then it's settled," Jimmie said. "Pipes pitches for us to-morrow. Let's beat it out o' here."

They left the shelter of their weather-stained temple, circled cautiously through the Laverty yard so as not to attract the attention of Mrs. Laverty, and gained the street before anything untoward happened. As the fates would have it, they carromed then against Marty Gleichner, throbbing with his new-born ambition to appear on the hurler's hill for the Red Sox Juniors in the coming contest.

"Say, Red, how about me pitchin' to-morrow?" he queried without wasting time in diplomatic exchanges.

Captain Laverty sought refuge in an assumption of disdain, but the perturbation of his two associates was not so easily disguised. They fixed Jimmie with their gaze and waited eagerly for what was to follow.

"Where'd you get the idea *you* can pitch?" he demanded, thrusting an aggressive chin toward the aspirant. Taken aback by this unexpected hostility, Marty forebore making a direct reply. Like his chief, he dissembled.

"Well, we haven't got Pipes Hogan," he returned. "I don't know who else you could put in 'ceptin' it was me. Them fellows can't hit my stuff, Jimmie."

"That don't make no difference if they can or not," the captain assured him, "because you ain't goin' to pitch. An' just for buttin' in like this an' tryin' to run the whole club, lemme tell you somethin'. You ain't even goin' to play to-morrow!"

Marty dropped back a step in horror and the co-conspirators of the fiery Laverty regarded him with amazement. The unconditional release of the shortstop who had signally aided the Red Sox Juniors to reach their proud eminence was not to be lightly regarded.

"I ain't goin' to play? Where do you get that stuff?" young Mr. Gleichner demanded when he had recovered his breath.

"You heard me the first time," Jimmie retorted. "You don't need to worry about who's goin' to pitch nor nothin' else because you won't be in the game. There's plenty enough kids around here can cover short that ain't always tryin' to be the big show. Come on, fellows!"

The trio moved away from Marty in good order and had almost reached the corner before his resignation from the team came down the wind to them.

"All right! I hope you get skinned to-morrow!" he shouted, and the distressing incident appeared to be closed.

The next day was Saturday, dedicated in season to the national pastime wherever youthful blood runs high. The clash of the Red Sox Juniors with the Actives was set for ten o'clock in the lot adjoining Spangler's livery stable, where a diamond with immovable bases of knobby granite had long been the scene of breath-taking contests.

More than an hour before the athletes were to assemble, that there might be time for such diplomatic maneuvers as should prove necessary, Captain Laverty led his oath-bound assistants to a point of vantage in the alley behind Hogan's cottage. From the shelter of the woodshed they were able to spy out the surroundings and, after a few minutes of

reconnoitering, Skeets saw the doleful face of Pipes at the bedroom window above the kitchen roof.

"He just took a look out an' went away again, so he's there, all right," he reported.

"What did I tell you?" Jimmie returned triumphantly. "Sure he's there! Now we got to wait an' see if his mother goes out for a minute an' his sister ain't snoopin' around the back. Then Tub can go up on the roof an' get him."

"What do I do?" Skeets queried as developments threatened to bar him from an active part in the daring doings.

"You go 'round in front o' the house and kinda stall around so you can see if Mrs. Hogan goes out," the captain ordered. "If she does, beat it back to the alley an' give us a wave. Then we can go ahead an' you'll watch out for anybody comin'."

Fortune favored the conspirators, as she frequently does. Skeets had been on his post of observation but a few minutes and was still striving to disguise his secret service rôle in that of a languid and carefree small boy, when the vegetable huckster's wagon turned the corner and bore down upon the scene. A few moments after his hail reverberated through the street Mrs. Hogan and her daughter emerged through the doorway Skeets was watching.

The lookout waited only long enough to be certain they were going to foregather at the wagon-wheel before he dashed away to send his wireless that the coast was clear. Having received Jimmie Laverty's "O. K.," he cautiously returned to his post, ready to give warning of any unexpected move of the enemy.

Tub had meanwhile gone into action. From the fence to the low roof of the summer kitchen was an easy climb, even for one of his girth. A few moments after the signal was flashed, he was kneeling in front of the bedroom window. Almost within reach of his fingers sat Pipes, reading a tattered story-paper that had been folded into such small compass as could readily be concealed in the event of a surprise visit from down-stairs. His throat was muffled to the ears in red flannel, but beyond that he gave no outward signs of the plague with which he was supposed to be threatening the community.

Tub tapped on the glass. Instinctively the invalid thrust his story into the shelter of his blouse before turning to look. The plump face of his unexpected caller, pressed against the window, startled him and he leaped from his chair, ready for flight.

"Hey! Wait a minute!"

Tub's familiar voice brought him up short. The bandit of his story paper was not crouched outside his window, after all. Wonderingly he made his way thither and raised the sash.

"You dassen't talk to me, Tub! I got mumps!" he announced with becoming pride. "What y' doin' up here?"

"I don't care nothin' about mumps—I've had 'em," Tub cheerily replied. "The fellows want you to come on an' pitch that game we got with the Actives to-day."

"Me? Why, you poor simp, I'm quaramteened! I can't go out!"

Pipes looked with mingled scorn and pity on Tub, who did not realize these portentous facts. But the smile of his visitor was unfailing.

"That's all right. You're goin' out just the same," he declared. "Mumps don't keep you from pitchin' as good as you always do, an' we got to beat these birds to-day. Get your hat an' come on, Pipes. Jimmie an' Skeets are waitin' for you in the alley."

"Aw, what do you think?" Pipes protested. "What'll my mother say if I go out?"

The lure of the suggestion was strong upon him. Three days of inactivity beneath the home roof had bred in his spirit a yearning for the open. And no

such delirious thought as a ball game had come to him until Tub had flashed it upon his mental screen. He looked doubtfully at the tempter.

"She can't say anything till you come back because she won't know you're goin'," that suave young person pointed out, "an' me an' Jimmie will come home with you an' tell her how we dragged you out your window to win our game. She won't mind when she knows it wasn't your fault."

"You fellows'll sure come home with me?"

The patient's eyes sparkled in anticipation of unlooked-for adventure. Mumps might prove not without its recompense, after all.

"Didn't I say we would," Tub retorted. "Come on! You ain't got all day before your mother comes in."

"Where is she?" Pipes quavered. That important point had not occurred to him.

"Out in front—at the vegetable wagon. Hurry up and get a move on," Tub urged. "I'll help you down."

Pipes wasted no more time in indecision but dived for his hat and coat.

"All right, Tub," he said. "I'll take a chance if you fellows'll stick."

The lot beside Spangler's livery stable, devoted to the sparse sustenance of decrepit nags when not in demand for the national pastime, was thickly studded with vociferous small boys half an hour after the escape of Hogan from quarantine. Battles for the possession of bats and shrill contests over the ownership of ragged baseballs raged in half-a-dozen spots. At the home plate Captain Laverty, of the Red Sox Juniors, and Captain Smyrik of the Actives, with the major portion of their teams, were gathered around Umpire Kalovich, feverishly debating ground rules and financial settlements.

Into the umpire's hands Jimmie counted a dollar in dimes and nickels, audited by Captain Smyrik and his staff of assistants.

"There's our stakes," Captain Laverty announced. "Now let's see you fellows come across."

"Aw, what's the matter 'th you?" the enemy leader retorted. "Think we haven't got it?"

Thrusting a grimy hand into his hip pocket he brought up a tobacco sack from which he poured a dollar in small coins into the custody of the umpire.

"Here's ours. We'd play you for two bones just as fast, if you were game!"

"Is *that* so? Why n't you say so?" Laverty demanded. "After we trim you to-day we'll play you for two dollars next Saturd'y—if you want to!"

Umpire Kalovich buried the stakes in his trousers pocket and cut short the controversy with a wave of his hand as nearly official as he could make it.

"Come on an' play ball!" he ordered. "Here I'm tossin' up a nickel. What do you want—heads or tails?"

Captain Smyrik called heads and won. Urged by all the officials and a squad of volunteer coaches, the Red Sox slowly took the field. As the first batter of the Actives eagerly shouldered his way to the plate, Pipes Hogan seized the ball that the umpire had jealously guarded and hurried to the mound.

The red flannel bandage around his neck proclaimed him still an invalid, but when he wound up with the elaborate technique of Walter Johnson and let his fast one sizzle past the batter, it was evident that mumps had in no wise affected his good right arm. At the very outset of the game the umpire was constrained to call a strike, which is not considered strictly ethical in Spangler's lot unless a fellow takes a swing at it, and the subsequent offerings from young Mr. Hogan's collection brought joy to the heart of Captain Laverty. Beyond question, Pipes was fit for the day's work.

But at that juncture Fate began mixing into the affairs of the little red-haired pilot of the Red Sox Juniors in a most unexpected manner. Around the corner

of Spangler's livery stable Marty Gleichner edged his way, sullen and revengeful. In the first flush of indignation following his release from the team the day before, he had decided not to honor the field of play with his presence. If the team did not need him, he would not hang around and look on while the Actives trampled them in the dust. He would show Jimmie Laverty how little the Red Sox Juniors meant in his life.

But when the time for the big game arrived, Marty's resolution began to weaken and he found his recreant feet bearing him slowly but steadily toward the scene in which he should have been a star performer. He was late for the preliminaries. The yells of the partisans told him before he reached Spangler's big doorway that the battle was on, but he was wholly unprepared for the spectacle that awaited him.

His first glance was for the pitcher—the kingpin of the team, that he might himself have been but for Jimmie's jealousy of his prowess. Marty blinked and stared again when he saw the flannel-swathed hurler drawing back his arm to heave one over. For an instant he thought he must be mistaken. But when the pitcher continued to wind up with the familiar motion Marty had so long admired and vainly sought to copy, there was no longer room for doubt. It was Pipes, all right—Pipes, the quarantined, whose sister was banned from school until his recovery should be officially promulgated. And he was filling the proud post that should have been Marty's!

The ousted infielder was still in the shelter of the livery stable when this revelation came to him. None of the fans had seen him and as the outline of a mighty revenge began to take vague shape in his mind, he turned and retraced his steps. Well out of the range of vision of any who might look back, he broke into a run, and when he had covered a half-mile in this lively fashion, brought up panting before a two-story cottage, on the porch of which a grim-looking citizen sat reading and smoking.

He raised his eyes from the newspaper as Marty's hurrying footsteps came to a stop at his gate.

"What is it?" he growled.

"Say, Mr. Sellers, do you know what? Willie Hogan is playin' ball with the whole bunch over at Spangler's, an' he's s'posed to be home with the mumps!" Marty exploded.

Jeremy Sellers, truant officer of the school district, arose and glared down at Marty. It was Saturday—one of the two weekly holidays allowed him by law and a complaisant school board. His plans for the day included nothing that even resembled work. Yet a case of mumps breaking quarantine in his district and gaily bearing germs to a host of his charges was not to be overlooked.

"He is, eh? Who else is playing?"

Followed a detail of the batting order of the Red Sox Juniors and as many of the Actives as Marty could recall. The truant officer, rising to the occasion, took out notebook and pencil.

"Do you know where some of these boys live?" he inquired.

The informer did. More than that, he was voluble with statistics as to where they were likely to be found when away from the home reservation. And having given his evidence, Marty faded away.

Being a wise and experienced brand of truant officer, Mr. Sellers had not the least intention of attempting single-handed the arrest of a baseball game and its fleetfooted spectators. Instead he shaped his course for Downey street, to begin operations by interviewing Mrs. Hogan, legal custodian of Pipes and his mumps. She was still lingering at the gate in converse with Mrs. Schmidt over the line fence, her apron laden with garden truck. To both the truant officer was a familiar figure.

"Good morning, Mrs. Hogan," he saluted her. "Your Willie has the mumps, I understand."

"Yes, the poor child! He's been sick these three days now," she returned. "They're on both sides, Mr. Sellers, an' he's that bad with 'em it keeps me busy from mornin' till night."

"Where is he?"

Mrs. Hogan nearly dropped her load of vegetables on the official feet in her amazement.

"Where would he be but up-stairs in his bedroom?" she retorted. "I don't even let him down here with us for fear some of the neighbors' kids might run in and catch it!"

"Will you call him down here for a minute? I'd like to talk to him," the official continued. She looked startled and the interest of Mrs. Schmidt, on the other side of the fence, was undeniable.

"Run in and tell Willie to come down to the door a minute, Tessie," she ordered her daughter and turned again to Mr. Sellers.

"Is it something about the little byes around?" she asked. "Sure, Willie hasn't been out o' the house in so long he wouldn't know anything about 'em."

The truant officer stared down at her owlishly but maintained a mysterious silence, which was broken a few moments later by Tessie, flying out of the house with both arms upraised.

"Ma, he's cleared!" she shouted. "He's gone!"

Mrs. Hogan stared at her agape, and Sellers dropped his little bombshell.

"That shows how much care you take of a case like this," he said. "I just stopped by to tell you he's playing ball over in Spangler's lot."

This time the beets and potatoes showered down as Mrs. Hogan released her apron to grasp her distracted head with both hands. Mrs. Schmidt, too, was galvanized into immediate action.

"My Louie!" she exclaimed. "He is there, I bet it!"

"Th' little divil!" Mrs. Hogan ejaculated—presumably in reference to her own errant offspring—and with a simultaneous jump the two housewives started toward Spangler's.

Mr. Sellers watched their flight with a smile of triumph before strolling across the street to spread his glad tidings elsewhere. Mrs. Krutzner was training morning-glory vines on her window when he paused at the fence.

"I just wanted to tell you," he said, "Willie Hogan got out of the house this morning and he's playing ball over there with the boys. I s'pose you know he has mumps. I thought maybe your two boys—"

He did not need to finish his warning. The vines came down in a heap as Mrs. Krutzner took the trail for Spangler's. As she turned the corner, Mrs. Weber hailed her.

"What's the matter, Mrs. Krutzner?" she called. "I see Mrs. Hogan and Mrs. Schmidt running past—"

"Come on!" her neighbor advised pantingly. "It's that Hogan boy with mumps! He's playing ball with the boys—mine, maybe, and yours, too!"

Mrs. Weber was beside her by that time, moving as rapidly as her physical limitations permitted. To the eyes of the astonished neighbors the street seemed to be filled with fluttering skirts and aprons, and as Sellers strode along behind the hastening Amazons, he dropped a word to inquirers here and there that swelled their ranks.

The third inning was under way when the avalanche struck the ball field. Pipes was working beautifully. There was enough of a hop on his fast one to keep the Actives swinging madly and the only run they had amassed was due to a dropped fly that was nothing short of scandalous. The Red Sox Juniors had counted six times and were athirst for more when the diamond was invaded by a thick-set matron, bare-armed and somewhat disheveled as to coiffure, who bowled over the shouting spectators near the plate and bore down upon the star twirler.

"Jiggers, Pipes! It's your old lady," Captain Laverty shouted.

The warning came too late. Pipes attempted to dodge and break for cover, but Mrs. Hogan's capable grasp was on his pitching arm before he could escape.

"Now, my bold laddybuck, you come home with me!" she exclaimed with a world of satisfaction in her tone.

The ball game broke up right there, for at the instant there were several repetitions of the Hogan incident. Mrs. Weber descended upon Skeets while he was gaping at the twirler's plight, and the Krutzner pair were gathered in by their irate mother before the general scramble began. Mothers seemed to bob up in half dozen lots, and the lamentations that immediately arose were proof that judgment and the execution of sentence were summary in many cases. The Actives, hailing from foreign fields, went unscathed but they broke and ran before the onslaught together with those fortunate ones whose homes had not been officially notified. And into the midst of the turmoil stalked Mr. Sellers as the representative of the law.

Jimmie Laverty's little red head remained level. No one had appeared to capture him, and with a quick realization of what Mr. Sellers's presence meant, he backed Umpire Kalovich against the livery stable wall.

"Here, you! Where you goin' with that coin?" he demanded.

"I—I wasn't goin' no place!" the umpire gasped.

"Come through with our dollar!" the captain ordered. "I don't care anything about them other fellows' money. I want ours!"

The umpire counted a dollar into Jimmie's hand and hurriedly faded into the distance. Jimmie looked around for his trusted lieutenants, but Tub Harris alone was available. The luckless Skeets was being escorted across the lot by his mother, receiving as he went a comprehensive statement of her opinion on the morning's doings and a definite promise of reprisal.

"Look here, Tub, I got our half o' the stakes off'n Kalovich," Jimmie began. "I guess he went south with the Actives' money—none of 'em thought to roll him for it. I should think—"

He stopped as something wholly unexpected came within his line of vision. It was Marty Gleichner, hugging the shadow of Spangler's barn and grinning in vast delight upon the coup he had administered. The red-haired captain shifted his glance from Marty to the impressive figure of the truant officer at the plate, reciting health department ordinances to those who lingered to listen.

"There's that fresh Gleichner," he said. "I wonder if he snitched to Sellers about Pipes! Let's ask him!"

Tub grinned with anticipation and they descended upon the unsuspecting informer along a route that brought them up beside him before he realized he had been seen.

"Well, squealer, how do you feel about it?" Jimmie suddenly demanded in Marty's ear. The start of terror with which Marty turned carried undoubted evidence of guilt to his two inquisitors, and it needed not his faltering query as to what they were talking about to convince them they had convicted the proper person.

The subsequent events moved swiftly to a close, making a fitting climax to the surprising occurrences that Spangler Field had that day witnessed. Just which of the combatants led and which one crossed and countered need not be here set down. Sufficient to say that Jimmie went to it with avidity, Gleichner put up what defense his abilities warranted, and Tub hovered by as referee.

That there was no bar to the proceedings was due in large measure to the fact that Mr. Sellers moved on his way across the lot to the side street, unconscious of the *tours du force* he was missing by no

passing around the front of the livery stable. But those of the athletes who had not fled the maternal wrath that had visited the field assembled in force to the rallying cry: "Fight! Fight!" which went up from the first excited observers.

Notwithstanding that he was clothed with righteousness, from his point of view, Jimmie did not escape unscathed, although the victor's crown was his at the finish. Perched upon Marty's chest, with his fingers buried in the Gleichner hair, he forced from the unwilling lips of defeat an admission that Marty had snitched to Sellers and brought confusion upon the ball game, not to mention untold woe upon Pipes Hogan.

Further than that, while he was able to glare upon his fallen enemy with but one eye in working order, he extorted an agreement that Marty would thereafter be conspicuously absent from every field upon which the Red Sox Juniors met their rivals. Having accomplished which, he graciously permitted young Mr. Gleichner to arise and take himself away, puffed of lip, mussed and scratched as befits one who has lost a battle.

Jimmie shook off his admirers who essayed to accompany him, and with Tub as his only escort sought first aid to his swollen eye and battered features at the hose in Spangler's washroom. There his faithful lieutenant tenderly assisted him to repair damages in preparation for inspection by the Laverty household. When they had done their best Tub was still visibly depressed by his hero's lack of comeliness.

"Gee! That's some lamp he handed you, Jim!" he declared. "I guess she's goin' to get black, all right!"

The captain touched it tenderly but his grin radiated sheer happiness.

"I should worry!" he returned. "Wasn't it worth it?"

POSTERITY VS. AMES BENNETT

By FRANK R. ADAMS

BENNETT stood in the moonlight and contemplated with a sigh the door which had closed gently behind him.

On the steps he tortured himself with a recollection of her from whom he had just parted. Lennice Esterdahl was an unequivocal beauty. Charms such as hers would have made a lady's man out of Arthur Schopenhauer. Ames Bennett was more susceptible than the famous misogynist. He had needed no special inducements to be attracted to Lennice. In a general way he liked the sex to which she belonged and in particular he was simply crazy about her as a manifestation of the feminine hypothesis.

He had always known how wonderful she was, but now, with the echo of her refusal to marry him still burning in his ears, her desirability smote him more poignantly. The smooth way she did her hair and coiled it on the tender nape of her neck, the simple, direct gaze out of her clear blue eyes, the slender grace of her and the voice that throbbed like the deep notes of a cello—to think about them was exquisite pain.

If you have never loved anybody like that—well, maybe you are lucky and you certainly have saved yourself hours of misery—but, on the other hand, you have missed an awful lot of something called the phantom of happiness. The ghost of a palm that has rested in yours, the smile you can almost recall, those are the memories that distinguish poets from plumbers.

"I can never marry you."

How can the English language contain such a hideous phrase? "Hanged by the neck until dead," is a cheerful little epigram by comparison.

Yet she had said it and she was looking at him at the time.

"Why not?" he had asked stupidly, stunned by the abrupt disaster of which, to tell the truth, his honest conceit had not warned him.

"Because you are not a good physical specimen," she had told him with no attempt to beat about the bush.

"Eugenics!" he gasped in horror. "How did he get in here—who left the cage open?"

He was floored. He knew that what she had said was true—he was not a good physical speciment. Ames Bennett was the best sporting editor in New York, but when it came to muscular powers he simply was not there. Without his glasses he could not see ten feet in front of him, and he had no chest expansion to speak of. Besides that, he was so angular that it took a very skillful tailor to make him look like anything but a hat rack.

Ames was no beauty, but he had a way with him that so far had carried him blithely through life, skirting the pitfalls of accident, disease and love. If he had not been able to star on the athletic field or win championship honors in the ring, he at least could write about such things more grippingly than any reporter on his staff, and he knew more records and batting averages than the entertaining author of Spalding's Annual. More than one champion glove artist had been dug

up by Ames from obscure entertainments held in dingy lofts with a lookout posted below to swap stories with the poor blind policeman on duty.

But now he had run his little chariot into a post. Suddenly everything else he had ever desired sank into insignificance before this girl who was apparently dismissing him.

"Don't you love me?" he demanded. He found that he was on his feet already preparing to go.

"Why," she hesitated, "I don't know. That has nothing to do with the case. I wouldn't marry you, anyway."

"You always laugh at the things I say."

"Maybe I do, but a woman can't always be laughing at her husband."

"Some of 'em are."

"Don't make it hard for me, Ames, dear," she said, her voice full of sweet trouble. "You know I like you and I always thought we'd be married some day, but I didn't realize then how much I owed to posterity. We have no right to marry. It would be criminal. I have had myself examined and there is very little the matter with me—"

"Hear, hear," he applauded vigorously.

"While you—" she paused, taking in his entire superstructure critically.

"You needn't mention what's the matter with me," he interrupted. "I tried to enter West Point once and they told me."

"While you," she went on, ignoring the interruption and still looking for a place to begin on, "you are a shining example of what not to do for health and efficiency. You smoke incessantly. Why, I've seen you light one cigarette after another."

"That's economy," he objected feebly. "The kind of cigarettes I smoke are cheaper than matches."

"It's no use, Ames, to try to make me laugh," she said, soberly. "I used to be silly, but now I'm going to be sensible."

"If you're going to be sensible," he mourned, "then I suppose I haven't a chance. I'll admit no sensible girl would want to marry a half portion like me. My only chance was for you to develop emotional insanity. You don't know the address of any nice, half-witted girl, do you?" he continued hopefully.

She escorted him to the door in her old-time fashion, but here, instead of kissing him, as sometimes she had done, she offered him her hand. She seemed to feel the pointed omission for she said, "It isn't hygienic to kiss anyone."

"Good heavens!" he murmured in a daze, "think of the chances I have taken in my life. And think, also," he continued regretfully, "of the chances I have missed."

Although he tried to cheer himself up and take the edge off the scene with a jesting farewell, nevertheless, there was a real ache in his heart as he rode home in the subway to the bachelor apartment at One Hundred and Tenth street, which apparently was to be his home for the rest of his days.

For a week he moped around the office, messing up the box scores with a fine disregard for the three major leagues, and making an enemy for life of Kid Kennedy by failing to speak of his famous cross arm jab to the point of the chin of Battling Englander, in his recent bout with the latter.

The day after his turndown, his naturally optimistic mind had suggested to him that he build up his defective physique by exercise and to that end he had purchased a pair of Indian clubs which he resolved to employ night and morning before retiring and after rising.

His enthusiasm for exercise was somewhat dampened after he broke the chandelier in his room and hit himself twice in succession on the rear protuberance of his rather prominent head. He gave up the strenuous life before his landlady put him out for breakage. It was probably just as well, because, without knowing it,

he had kept a lighted cigarette between his lips all the time he was swinging the clubs.

At the end of the week he could stand it no longer. The annoying pain in his heart demanded chloroform. He knew that she could not be as desirable as his fancy and memory pictured her. No woman could.

He resolved to prove it to himself. He called her up. "Hello!" he said, as she answered the telephone. "Have you a friend by the name of Ames Bennett?"

"Surely," she replied with a thrill of surprised pleasure in her voice; "at least, I hope so."

"Is there any reason why your friends shouldn't call on you occasionally," he demanded, "especially if they can't stand it to stay away?"

"Why, no," she replied doubtfully; "I don't think so."

"Then I'm coming out to-night disguised as a friend. You will know me by a red carnation in my button-hole. I promise not to say a thing that isn't in the etiquette books under the head of 'Sample conversation for a lady and a gentleman who have met for the first time.'"

After dinner that night, Ames stood in front of the mirror in his room a long time, carefully examining his offending physique. Then he deliberately kicked himself twice and with a sigh sought the street, where he purchased a carnation for his coat lapel.

Lennice belonged to the society page strata of the New York population. By that is not meant that she moved in the Vanderbilt set, but that the doings of her friends frequently received mention in the newspapers, especially if the items were sent in. At any rate, her financial status was miles above that of a sporting editor. Her father was popularly supposed to have an underground tunnel connected with the sub-treasury.

There was a butler at Esterdahl's house who let Ames in and ushered him to the living-room, where Lennice was improving the shining moments by reading a ten-pound volume on anatomy.

"Good Lord!" Ames muttered to himself, as his eye fell on her graceful profile. "She's prettier than I thought."

At the sight of him she rose and a pleased smile illumined her features.

"As I live!" he exclaimed, "if it isn't Miss Jones! No? Am I mistaken? Then it's Miss Esterdahl. I always get you two girls mixed up."

"It's nice to see you again, Ames," she said, just a bit wistfully. "You are dreadfully entertaining, and I've been rather bored without you."

"What do you think of Mr. Grey's new novel?" he asked lightly, indicating the anatomy she had been reading. "I think in some ways he is stronger than Robert W. Chambers, don't you? Sex novels are going out, though, I believe."

The butler announced Mr. Robert Howe.

"Robert Howe?" Ames questioned, while the butler went to usher in the visitor.

"Yes," Lennice admitted. "I think you know him."

"If you mean the chap who was champion shot-putter and hammer-thrower six or seven years ago, of course I know him. We were in the same class at the university."

"He's the one. He drops in nearly every evening for a little while. Father and Mr. Howe are great friends."

Robert Howe entered. Nature had copied some of the best Greek statuary when she put him together. Just six feet, broad in shoulder, but thin in the flank, with a pink-and-white skin that looked as if it had recently been scrubbed, Robert Howe could have been an "ad" for anybody's brand of ready-made clothing without being retouched a particle by the artist.

But when nature had done that much for him she quit. Mentally he was equipped for horse-shoeing only. Still,

any man who looked the way he did in a track suit didn't need to be any Socrates.

Not that Robert lacked any confidence in himself. Nothing like that. Everything had been so easy for him that he took it as a matter of course.

"How are you?" he greeted Ames laconically when he discovered there was another caller.

The conversation languished although Lennice strove desperately to keep it alive. The young athlete had a capacity of only one thought an hour even when he was running full speed, and Ames, for his part, couldn't think of anything except sarcastic remarks, most of which he managed to stifle before they reached the open air.

At length, Lennice suggested that they take up the rug and dance. "I am teaching Mr. Howe some of the new steps," she explained.

"Oh, yes," acknowledged Ames without interest. Then, apparently without any reference to what had gone before, he added in a moment. "They had a swell troop of performing elephants with the Barnum show this year. Did you see them?"

The girl got his meaning even if the other man didn't and shot him a reproof with her eyes, which caused him to wilt in burlesque chagrin. "Will you play the piano, Ames?" she asked.

"Sure, Ames, you play the piano," chimed in Howe. "You used to be pretty good at it when you were at college. You will be a lot better than the phonograph."

"I am intensely flattered," the sporting editor contrived to say instead of several other things that crowded to his mind. "Chain me by one leg to the piano and I will make Wagner sound like a Quaker meeting."

While he played aimlessly selections of ragtime and popular waltzes, Ames had a lot of time to decide what he thought about Robert Howe and his relation with Lennice Esterdahl. The deliberate calmness with which the girl was going about her search for the physically perfect specimen chilled him to the marrow. It was the most cold-blooded proposition he had ever heard of. Under the modern plan, courtship could be done away with in favor of a physical examination and marriage would be more like an operation than a ceremony.

Before this evening Ames had rather liked young Howe, although he had never considered him seriously as amounting to much. They had been friends in the way that athletes and sporting editors are always friends, the athlete looking down on the editor with good-natured tolerance and the editor regarding the athlete as a sort of overgrown child.

But now he discovered that he really hated the other and his fist itched to land on the jaw of the six-footer, although he knew that any power he could exert in a blow could do no more than annoy his rival.

When they were tired of dancing, Ames gloomily excused himself on the plea that he had some writing to do. Lennice escorted him to the door, vaguely troubled at his unhappiness.

"I am sorry you can't stay, Ames," she said. "I thought you and Mr. Howe would be sure to like each other, because you are both interested in sports. He says that at the next Olympic games he expects to put the shot fifty-two feet. Isn't that wonderful?"

"Uh-huh!" admitted Ames listlessly. "But what chance would he have against a cannon that can heave one of those things ten miles? Tell me, beautiful creature, will you meet me for lunch tomorrow and let me say something you ought to know?"

"Why—"

"Have no fear. I will promise to sterilize myself every ten minutes while we are together," he hastened to supply bitterly.

"All right, then, I'll come."

"I will expect you at the Plaza at one-thirty," he said on departing, and then added significantly, "alone."

Ames had no definite idea why he wanted to see her. Probably there wasn't any particular reason; in fact, reason was tugging him the other way and telling him never to see any woman again and, if necessary, take the veil, or whatever it is a man takes when he becomes a monk.

He felt that this engagement with her on the morrow was going to be the last. It was only a lunch, but it depressed him.

She kept her appointment promptly. He had been there half an hour ahead of time, walking up and down the corridor, smoking cigarettes feverishly.

"You ought not to smoke so much," she reproved as they met. "It will kill you."

He grinned as he threw away the remnant of his cigarette.

"I gave you an opportunity to reform," he said, "but now, since you have given me up there isn't a soul in all the world to tell me what I should or shouldn't do. Gee!" he exclaimed with a sigh, "ain't it great to be free?"

They sat in the corner of the restaurant at an intimate little table for two.

"What were you going to tell me?" she demanded promptly, when they were alone, free from the ministrations of the waiter.

"What was I going to tell you?" he repeated vaguely. "Was I going to tell you something?"

"Yes, you spoke about it last night, that's why I came to meet you to-day."

"If I've got to tell you something I will tell you the only thing I can think of."

"What's that?"

"I love you." He looked at her hopefully, as a dog who expected to be fed might, and then continued, speaking hesitatingly. "Oh, I know I shouldn't have said that. I promised I wouldn't, didn't I? But when every street car rattling on the tracks keeps saying it and the robins in the parks and the policemen on the beat, and even the Dago peddlers that go yelling through the streets keep shouting, 'I love you,' instead of 'strawberries,' the way they ought to, why, I just can't help joining in."

"You must stop, Ames," Lennice reproved, looking around for fear somebody had heard him.

"Stop? Why talk of stopping Niagara Falls?"

"But you must stop," she faltered. "I am engaged to Robert Howe."

A shrieking silence fell between them. He picked up a fork nervously and laid it down again.

"Engaged to Robert Howe?" he said finally and calmly in a voice which he did not recognize as his own. "You can't love him. You couldn't even be friends with the owner of a mind like his. Why, Robert Howe's think tank is stuffed with cornmeal mush."

"You mustn't say such things and I must never see you again." She rose with the luncheon untasted. "I wanted to tell you first about the engagement before you saw it in the papers, but if you are going to be rude I am sorry I was so considerate." She turned to go. "Good-by. After I am married I know I shall miss you dreadfully."

Ames sat stunned as she went away. "That's a fine way to begin matrimony. 'After I am married I shall miss you dreadfully.' Great Scott! There may be something in this cave-man business, after all."

She had said nothing about the date of her wedding, but Ames learned it soon enough through the society columns of his newspaper. No time was wasted. The wedding was planned for a fortnight later, in the church of the Holy Something-or-other on Fifth avenue, somewhere in the Seventies.

Ames spent the next two weeks in a sort of numb condition, doing his work automatically. The fact that her wed-

ding was actually announced was so stunning that his brain refused to react to it; after the ceremony was over it would be so hopeless. Heretofore he had never quite given up the fond delusion that she was not serious when she had turned him down. Seeing the announcement in cold type removed all his doubts.

The papers made quite a fuss about the approaching wedding. The fact that it had been eugenically arranged leaked out and the novelty of it attracted a great deal of attention. Robert Howe's position in the world of sport was such that the news of his nuptials was important enough to be mentioned on the pink page. Altogether, there was a lot more lime-light about the affair than anybody cared for, especially Ames Bennett, who read every reference with a groan.

The so-called funny paragraphers made material out of it and the cartoonists managed to earn a day's pay on the same subject. To escape from his distress Ames sought the theater. At the first musical show he attended he found the comedian getting a hearty laugh from an interpolated line about the scientifio marriage. Ames left the theatre for a cabaret and found them singing a song about it.

He went to a bar and sterilized himself thoroughly with alcohol. The physician who gave him the morphia later said that as an amateur sterilizer Ames was a pippin and deserved a medal from the International Association of Distillers and Brewers.

The wedding was to be in the evening. When the afternoon of the fatal day rolled around, the managing editor of the newspaper on which Ames was employed called him into his office.

"I want to talk to you, Bennett," said the Old Man.

"All right," said Ames, with gloomy nonchalance. "I don't blame you if you don't like the way I have been doing my work lately. I admit it is rotten."

"I didn't say anything about your work," said the managing editor with some surprise. "What you have done is all right, or if it wasn't I didn't notice it. It's what you haven't done that I want to speak about. I haven't seen a single reference on your page to the Howe-Esterdahl wedding."

Ames groaned.

"Every other paper in town has had some good funny stuff in the sporting sheet about this marriage and the kind of children they will have. Great Scott, man, where is your sense of humor? Robert Howe is one of the foremost athletes in the country and people who read the sporting page are interested in his wedding, especially under such novel circumstances."

The sporting editor rolled a pencil uneasily between his two palms. His soul was writhing under the unintentional torture his superior was inflicting upon him. He dared not trust himself to speak for fear he would betray his emotions.

"I'll tell you what you do," the managing editor went on, wondering if Bennett, who was usually voluble, had lost his powers of speech, "you go over to the wedding to-night at the church and see what happens and then come back to the office and write a funny feature story about it."

"A funny feature story," Ames repeated in horror, exasperated beyond endurance. "Don't you know that this wedding is the biggest disaster since the Titanic? And you ask me to write a funny story about it!"

"Why, what do you mean?" said the other in surprise, gazing with friendly concern at the young man, who was rapidly enveloping himself in cigarette smoke.

"Don't ask me," Ames returned moodily. "I'll do it. If you want a funny story about how it feels to have your leg cut off, I'll go to the hospital and get the material. It makes me laugh now when

I think how funny it is. Ha! ha!" He croaked hoarsely.

Still chuckling mirthlessly, Ames left the office and proceeded to his apartments to dress for the ceremony, which he purposed to attend in the double capacity of guest and newspaper humorist.

The church was crowded to the doors. The ushers had difficulty in keeping the aisles clear. Apparently none of the invitations were unused. Everyone was curious to see this bride and groom of a new régime mated under perfect physical conditions.

Ames managed to effect an entrance, however, by proclaiming his relation with the press. He discovered that he was not alone in his glory. There were a dozen other reporters occupying front seats, as if it were a baseball game or a great legal battle.

At last the ordeal began. There seemed to be countless preliminaries. Reams of music had to be played and a great many ordinary-looking people had to parade around in new clothes, the men looking miserable and the women proud.

The groom came in. No king could have carried himself more proudly. He actually seemed to like it. Ames recollected having seen him strut before a grandstand in the same way, clad only in a track shirt and trousers. Now in evening dress he was a no less commanding figure. The sporting editor admitted bitterly in his inner consciousness that his rival looked like a perfect mate for the most beautiful girl in the world.

The women in the audience agreed with him. An almost perceptible gasp of admiration fluttered through the air as he walked down the aisle with his best man.

Then, slowly, with head raised proudly, came the bride and her father.

Ames' heart sank like a leaden shot. How could he say anything funny about her with his heart telling him she was the most wonderful creature in all the world and he was just about to lose her.

The organist was playing softly a quiet, well-bred air, the scent of flowers drifted in on a slight breeze, swaying the silken decorations, which were strung like a canopy from the altar and the balcony to the dome.

Finally, Lennice stood side by side before the minister with her physically perfect mate. After interminable seconds he addressed them.

At that moment a single feminine cry pierced the hush which pervaded the church.

There was an uneasy movement in the congregation. People turned to ask their neighbors what had happened.

The minister paused in his droning recital of the marriage service.

"Fire!" the cry which makes your heart stop, raced shrilly to the vaulted ceiling and echoed back again. Scarce less rapidly tongues of flame began flickering around the ends of the silken ribbons which were attached to the altar-rail. A loose end of ribbon had been blown by the wind into an open candle. The fire rapidly communicated itself from ribbon to ribbon. Little darts of flame raced up the narrow strips of cloth to the dome. As each ribbon burned off at the rail it swung, a line of fire, out to the middle of the congregation.

The women huddled back into the pews, terrified beyond action by the tiny flames that were swinging in their faces.

Then, all at once, a voice was heard, addressing them authoritatively:

"There is no danger," said the voice, proceeding from a thin young man who had unceremoniously pushed the minister aside and taken his place on the platform. "If you will file out quietly, the forward aisles first, I will guarantee to get you all out safely."

Sparks were falling from above, but for some reason the crowd listened to this curious young man who so confidently guaranteed safety.

"The organist will play a march," said the young man peremptorily, looking up

to the balcony where the keyboard of the organ was concealed.

There was no response from the organ.

"The organist, unfortunately, had another engagement," said the young man.

All at once the organ burst forth into a clamorous riot of music. The air was a popular one, which had probably never heard itself played on a church pipe organ before. It served its purpose, though. Everybody laughed and then, accompanied by a rapid fire of directions from the young man at the altar, they filed out in fairly orderly fashion, while the lurid flames from the burning decorations made curious lights in the dim heights in the church.

At last the church was empty, save for the young man and the organist.

"You can cut that out now," said the young man, addressing the invisible player.

From overhead the sparks were coming down like rain and an unpleasant smelling blue smoke swirled through the air as the wind from outside played pranks in the vast audience hall. Hardly noticing these things and certainly forgetful of the place where he was, the young man at the altar thoughtfully inserted a cigarette between his lips and lit it from one of the altar candles.

Down the steps from the tiny balcony where the organ keyboard was concealed came a person in what had previously been a white brocaded satin dress. It was now soiled in several places with cinders, and the remnant of a chiffon veil which had been hastily torn off was draped rakishly about her ears.

In the dim light at the altar the young man perceived the dress before he noticed the features.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed, "I didn't know the organist was a girl or I never would have asked you to stay. I have to admit that you've got good nerve." Then, as she came closer to the altar the light illumined her features completely. "We'll I'm damned!"

"Hello, Ames," she said calmly, looking him over curiously and noting with a quizzical smile the cigarette he was smoking. "You are a brave man, Ames."

"Not very," he returned with a half-smile. "You see, I knew this church was fireproof construction and that there wasn't any chance of anything burning except the decorations. For pure bravery you are entitled to the nickel-plated coal scuttle. How did you come to be playing the pipe organ?"

"Why," she returned modestly, "when I saw that the regular organist had run away, I just happened to be nearest, so I went up and did it."

"Gee, you are a wonder!" he said, taking in her ragged wedding costume from head to foot. "I don't know any other girl in the world who would have done that."

She returned his look with shining eyes. "And I don't know any other man in the world, Ames, who would have handled the crowd the way you did. You sure have a way with you."

"Well," he said briskly, wishing to change the subject from the one that was breaking his heart, "let's get out of here and hunt up Mr. Howe and the minister, so we can go on with the wedding." He looked at his watch. "I've got to get into the office with a story about this in half an hour if I am going to make the first edition."

The ribbons had burned themselves out and save for a few smoldering strands the fire had practically extinguished itself.

"Never mind about Mr. Howe," said Lennice, linking her arm in his. From the way Mr. Howe started he ought to be down to Forty-second street by now, so we won't wait for him to come back."

Without any particular regard for hygiene or scandal, Ames Bennett kissed the eugenic bride full on the lips.

"The funny part about it," he explained a little later, "is that I didn't set fire to the church myself!"

THE REAPERS

By ANNIE BATTERMAN LINDSAY

SOME years ago, when the Boom was abroad in the land, it invaded the Northwest Territory with peculiar frenzy. Cities sprang up out of the prairie as by enchantment; not tent and shanty cities, mind, but metropolises, with long, straight streets, and imposing brick and stone blocks which housed banks, real estate offices, hotels, real estate offices, saloons, and restaurants, and real estate offices, commercial establishments, real estate offices. Tram-car lines were projected, if not built, and electricity made night luminous. Presently, when the town lots were all sold, the speculators departed, and the investors settled down to business and began eating each other while waiting for the country to settle up and railroads and commerce to arrive. When they had exchanged commodities with one another until their stocks were exhausted, or foreclosed by the wholesalers in Toronto, Victoria, or St. Paul, they silently stole away, one by one, without folding their tents, which remained as monuments of man's gullibility.

To one of these deserted cities, from which the Last Inhabitant had fled some time since, there came one afternoon in spring the Reapers, a man and woman. They came from the South, in a Concord coach, filled to its utmost capacity with their effects, and took possession of the town They chose their domicile gayly, with reference to a convenient stable for their horses, of which they had four. Two they turned adrift to shift for themselves, and two they kept. The home of their choice was a Queen Anne cottage in the suburbs, where a few neglected rose bushes still survived in the garden.

"If we get tired of housekeeping, dear, you know we can go and live at the hotel," said the woman, and she laughed delightfully.

"Yes," said the man, "or we can take a suite of rooms and board at the restaurant," and then they both laughed.

It was a great lark, getting settled in their house. The woman, who was rosy, and plump, and dimpled, did not perform much of the hard work, but her laugh was an incentive. She sat about on boxes, with her skirts tucked up, and supervised, or on the veranda railing and watched the pruning of the rose bushes, which she had a fancy for reclaiming. She was not much of a cook, but they managed between them, with many caresses, by the way, to prepare sufficient for their needs. Laughter, and song, and foolish badinage made the hours fleet. If there were a Past that it would have been burdensome to remember, neither remembered it. This was a new world, and they were primal creatures in it, beloved of the dew and the sun, the moon and the stars in their courses.

When the weather tempted, they rode about the country, exploring it. They hunted together, he teaching her to be expert with her small rifle; the hunting was pastime, but it was also needful to vary the larder. He planted and tended a garden, that they might have salads and green peas, and potatoes for the winter. (He had been a farmer's son before he was a bank president.) In the

evenings, as they sat on the piazza, she played the mandolin and they sang college ditties together.

Theirs was an idyllic existence, and a moralist would have been incensed to observe how kindly was nature, and how little remorse preyed upon their minds. Everything was food for amusement. The pyramid of tins, of all shapes and sizes, that grew up in the back lot as the canned goods disappeared from their storeroom, they called the Tower of Babel, because of the variety of languages that found representation on the labels.

They laughed at the acoustic effects which accompanied their footsteps through the empty streets. She said it was the Ghost of the Boom, prowling around the haunts of his former triumphs.

They explored the deserted buildings, and rooted out all sorts of flotsam and jetsam. Once it was a bundle of love-letters left in a bureau drawer. They read them with shouts of mockery. Again it was a row of empty fruit jars, which they appropriated to put over their tomato plants. Another time it was a pile of advertising circulars setting forth in florid terms the advantages of their present place of residence.

"The advantage of its solitude was the one advantage they never thought of advertising; and now it is the only one that procures it the honor of our society," said the man, and, as usual, they laughed.

Then it was a pile of old periodicals, that they carried away and devoured with avidity — which was a bad symptom, if they had stopped to think of it. They went into the rotunda of the hotel, and tried all sorts of vocal gymnastics to rouse the echoes in the tiers of empty rooms. They took Solitude by the ears, as it were, and made faces at it, and laughed always.

They got into the way of calling themselves Adam and Eve, and said to each other that they were happier outside the garden than ever they were within it.

"Is not this divine?" said Eve, as they sat one twilight hour on the steps of their little porch, her head upon his shoulder. "We thought it would be an exile, but it is heaven. I don't want ever to go back among people. Here we are all-sufficing to each other, but back in the world, some day, some one would find us out and point the finger at us."

The man tightened his clasp around her supple form. "You know," he replied gravely, "that we counted upon that. You thought you would be able to bear all that, and more, for love's dear sake."

"And so I can," she said, "but this is better."

"Well," he replied again, "we have the best part of a year before us, you know, for you to change your mind in. By the time the supplies have given out, I fancy you will want to see people, if only at a distance. Everybody will have given up looking for us by that time, and we can slip away to South America somewhere for awhile, and be as secluded as ever you please, and still within reach of human companionship, if we desire it."

"Have you looked at the money lately?" she asked irrelevantly.

"Who would steal it?" he returned.

"Anyway, let's look at it," she persisted.

So they went inside, lit a lamp, and undid their boxes and examined the hoard. "It is not so much after all," she said. "You never can do anything with all those papers. Why not burn them? They are a great weight to carry about."

"No, they are of no value to me," he replied. "But they are of immense value to other fellows. Some day I shall be able to make terms with them, and then we can live where we please."

"Do you believe," she asked, drumming absently on the edge of a box with her taper fingers, and not looking at him, "do you believe, really believe in your

heart, that you will be able to slip away so easily when we go out of here—back again among people?"

"If I didn't believe it, I should not have undertaken it," he answered. "Don't you believe it, too? You did once."

"Did I?" she said. "No, I never looked so far ahead. I don't now, for that matter. The present is enough for me. Don't let's lose any more of it mooning over this horrid box. Come away."

As the autumn approached, life began to wear a less holiday aspect. Fuel must be provided for the long winter; the wild grass, growing rankly in the city streets, must be cut and cured for the horses; the potatoes must be dug and stored. Eve followed Adam about everywhere. Two is company, but one is a crowd, in a deserted place. Too many viewless things make themselves felt and heard under such circumstances.

"What were we thinking of, that we didn't fetch a dog?" said Eve one day, "He would have been a lot of company and protection, too."

"Protection from what, the serpent?" asked Adam, and then they both laughed.

One night one of the horses was taken sick. The man came in after a lantern, and the woman followed him out. All night they worked over the animal, fomenting him with hot water, and dosing him like a Christian. In the morning he was better.

"Dear," said Eve, "what would become of us if anything were to happen to the horses?"

"We should have to construct a flying machine," the man answered lightly; but there were lines in his face that were not there the day before. With the first rain of autumn, their cottage leaked like a sieve. "We shall have to go to the hotel," they said.

Accordingly, they moved as soon as the storm was over. They chose a sunny suite of rooms, with windows facing the south, transfered their belongings, and made themselves cozy for the winter. Of stoves and ranges, as well as many other bulky articles of furniture, they had their choice. It was while this flitting was in progress that a queer thing happened. Adam was away with the wagon, and Eve was alone in their apartments, arranging them with housewifely care; quite absorbed in her occupation, and humming softly to herself, she was not in the least startled at first, when a little cooing voice behind her said, "Mamma!"

"Yes, dear, what is it?" she answered, with her mouth full of tacks. Then, at the sound of her own voice in the empty room, she threw up her head and looked about her, aghast, breathless, beads of perspiration starting out on her face, suddenly grown pallid with the pallor of a corpse. After an instant she cast herself on her knees, half beside, half over, a couch, and sobbed with the abandonment of despair. Thus Adam found her when he came back. It was the beginning of the end. He never left her alone again, longer than to go downstairs after an armful of wood, but even in the midst of conversation she would stop and say, "Listen! Now don't you hear it, the steps in the hallway?"

To be sure, the great empty building was full of whisperings and patterings, rustlings, and sighings, and moanings, enough to shake stronger nerves than her's. Often a low, intermittent hum went on, like the buzz of voices. At times they could all but make out the words of the conversation. That, he satisfied her, was a drift of air circling about in the rotunda. The footfalls he never could hear. The Voice she said nothing about; and indeed it was a good while before she heard it again.

But the footfalls and the whisperings were more than she could endure. "Let us go! Let us leave this dreadful place!" she pleaded at last.

"I am afraid it is too late," he replied, regarding her anxiously. "It is liable to snow any day now. But we will move. We will find some smaller, cozier house,

where there are not so many noises and echoes. We will go and look for one right now."

They went out under a leaden sky, and found a residence in tolerable repair that gave promise of dry quarters; but the search had consumed the afternoon, and the moving must be deferred until the morrow. When the morrow dawned the snow was falling in a cloud, and any change of base was out of the question. So then they set themselves to endure with cheerfulness. Neither was a weakling. They kept themselves busy. He split wood and minded the horses, and she kept with him and helped him. She cooked and swept, and he helped her. They played the mandolin and sang, and beat one another at cards. Every day he promenaded her up and down the halls and long dining-room so many miles for a constitutional. He made a bow and arrows, and they practised archery. They played paper chase through the rooms, and, when hunted too closely, she would recall a childish accomplishment to her aid, and slide down the banisters! Outside the snow fell and drifted, and the silence of the summer became in their memories as the clatter of looms in comparison with this silence of winter, broken only by the fall of mimic avalanches from the eaves of some house, or the howl of a gray wolf drawn from afar by the scent of their beasts, stabled in the basement.

Eve seemed well on the way to recovery from her temporary panic, when one day she heard the little Voice again. They were having a paper chase, and she was eagerly pursuing Adam through the empty rooms, when the Voice said, "Mamma!" and brought her up short. After that it spoke to her with increasing frequency; never when she was listening for it and dreading it, or (as she sometimes did) longing for it, but always when she was busy and absorbed in something else; or waking her up out of sleep, and bringing her upright in her bed, trembling like a leaf, and with wide eyes staring into the darkness. It never said anything but "Mamma!" or repeated it the second time; but she came to know at last, that from any momentary respite of self-forgetfulness, or fragmentary happiness, the little Voice would call her back to her penance. Sometimes, after it had spoken, she could hear the patter of tiny feet in the hallway or on the stairs.

So the weeks went by over the dwellers in the abandoned city, until one night they were aroused by hearing one of the horses below stamping extraordinarily. Adam arose and went down hastily to see what was amiss. He could not discover that anything was, and returned, shivering, up the stairs. The bed was empty, and in a panic he searched about the rooms, lantern in hand. At length he found Eve cowering in a corner. "Eve! Eve! What is it?" he cried, afraid to touch her. She did not answer, and her eyes reflected the light from the lantern like an animal's. "What is the matter with you, dear? Don't you know me?" he asked again, pleadingly, raising the lantern on high, so that the light fell upon his face. Reason came back to her eyes slowly.

"Oh, is it you?" she said. "I did not know who you were at first." After that he grew in a manner accustomed to behold that strange film glaze her eyes, when for a moment, as she told him, her world grew strange to her, and each familiar object became something never seen before.

One day, when he had been after an armful of wood, she had disappeared on his return. He sought her from room to room, through the echoing halls, opening every door, calling her name aloud at first; but ceasing finally, lest the echoes should add to her fright. At last, on the third floor, he came to a door that was locked.

Behind that she must be; and he knocked, and called, and besought with

phrases of love, that she would open to him, but there was neither word nor movement in response. Fearing to break the door in, lest she should fling herself from the window, and fearing, too, lest she should perish in the cruel cold of the unwarmed chamber, he framed a desperate resolution. He entered the room adjoining the locked one, and, softly raising the window, crept out upon a narrow ornamental cornice which ran around the building below this third tier of windows. It was coated with ice, and a chance as desperate as a man would care to take in any strait. But because he was reckless of consequences, he passed in safety the short distance separating the windows, and stood on the sill of the next in comparative safety.

He raised the sash with the care necessitated by his situation, and let himself into the room, but the woman there was oblivious to his presence. She was kneeling in the vacant room, upon the bare floor, surrounded by the empty white walls, with her head drooping, and arms moving gently back and forth as if swaying a cradle, while she smiled and crooned a soft lullaby. Noiselessly he turned the key in the lock and stole away; he returned presently with a blanket, and gently enwrapped that kneeling form, all unconscious of his touch. And then he left her to awake in her own time from a dream to which he never referred.

At length there came, one eve, a strange wind out of the upper sky; all night it blustered, and raved, and raced through the empty streets with a noise as of marching battalions. And in the dawn, great masses of snow began to come thundering down from the roofs with rush and roar. A January thaw had set in, and the air was vocal with a thousand lispings, and tricklings, and tinklings, and gurglings, and cracklings, and creepings. The very joists in the wall seemed to be feeling the running of sap in their fibers.

"Now let us go!" cried Eve eagerly, as she woke and hearkened. "Let us go away from this awful place!" All day the strange wind blew, and under their eyes as they watched, the snow vanished, and the brown, wet earth steamed in the sun.

On the second day they turned their faces southward, their wagon weighted with their scanty stores—and the treasure box.

The prairie lay before them, but the man knew well that the mountain passes which rose between them and freedom were still choked with snow.

But the woman said, "Go! I must go, whatever comes of it!"

It was some weeks later that the Avenger found them, and when he found, his hand fell empty of its vengeance; for this was the manner of it. Frozen, standing upright in a huge snowdrift, where the blizzard had overtaken him, was the man. At his back gaped the portal of a mountain defile, a wintry chaos of glacier-riven rock and snow-laden firs.

Passing his enemy by, the Avenger pressed on into the gorge; around its first turn, in a sheltered nook, he found her whom he sought. But his hand fell empty again, whether of vengeance or of pardon; for on her, too, the ice-king had breathed. She was crouched before the ashes of the extinct fire; around her lay scattered widely the contents of the treasure box; while clutched close to her breast by her rigid fingers, as though she would shield it from the storm, lay a strange bundle—a faded shawl rolled into the semblance of the muffled form of a child. Upon the frozen whiteness of the icy wall behind her were traced with a blackened ember, in a woman's uncertain handwriting, these words:

"The Wages of Sin is Death."

Afar off in the wilderness the beasts of the wild prowl through a deserted city, moldering into decay while yet the timbers of its framing are unseasoned; and the Ghost of the Boom remains in undisturbed possession of his kingdom.

THE DEAD-BEATS

By ELWOOD BROWN

IS this the Quick Action Law & Collection Agency?" The voice sounded tart over the telephone.

"This is the Q-A," answered J. McNutt, a mellowness in his voice but irritation in his vitals.

"Well, this is the Lisbon Fashion Shop —credit manager. I want to know why in blazes you're not getting better results on my accounts. You're slow enough to change your name. What's the trouble?"

J. McNutt winced. The average business house expects an agency to collect year-old bills in three days.

"Trouble?" he returned. "Nothing else. You gave me one hundred bills. Seventy-five disappeared, ten disputed, six claim the Lisbon a crooked house, five are flat broke, three have promised to pay and I *collected one.*"

"How much?" the voice came incisively over the wire.

"Two dollars and twenty-eight cents," and a smile struggled to find itself on McNutt's crusty face. "For a petticoat. Promised to pay for the suit next month."

The man on the other end failed to see anything humorous. "Well, go after 'em. We need the money. Go strong! Deliver!"

The lines of McNutt's mouth turned down. "Deliver it is!" he returned abruptly.

When Billy Eager, star outside man of the Q-A force, came in, his chief shoved the Lisbon list under his nose. "Here's the stuff worthy of all the metal you've got. We'll tackle the biggest one first."

The keen-eyed collector frowned. "$350 for gowns!" he whistled. "Who's their credit man?"

"They've got none. Lyons is supposed to be. He has plenty of speech but no brains. He belongs in the selling department, where ideas are poured in from a fountain-head. How any sane man could let $350 worth of merchandise fly away as this seems to have done is more—and he tried to call me down!" J. McNutt paused a moment. "I told him we'd deliver, and we will!"

"I'll turn that butterfly equipment into real money!" seconded the star collector grimly. "For the honor and glory of the house and the lasting praise of Quick-Action!"

That afternoon, Billy Eager began his special efforts on behalf of the Lisbon Fashion Shop and particularly its $350 claim against Mrs. Rhoades Hathaway Worley. On the face of it anyone with a three-play name should be deemed a poor risk.

The collector's trail led him into the fashionable apartment house neighborhood, as was to be expected, and as also was to be expected, the collector went from the Hotel Stratford to the Del Mar apartments, to the Worthington and ended at the Berkshire. Persons with high-sounding names affect a preference for hotels and apartment houses bearing appellations of like euphony. "I'm stopping at the Larronde," sounds better than "you can catch me at the Hotel Schultz."

At the Berkshire, after useless inquiry at the hotel desk, Eager canvassed a

number of employees for information as to Mrs. Worley's succeeding whereabouts. He finally baited an elevator operator by giving him a private, confidential view of the itemized bill which ranged from a pale green meteor gown to selected lingerie and hose.

"Some dolling," commented the operator with a connoisseur's appreciation. "And you expect to collect? You *do?*" he emphasized. "You don't know the Worleys. I've seen many a haggard collector on the trail."

"They're wonders, I know. Now, listen. You're too bright a young man to waste your talents on this mechanical job. You know where they went. They always tell someone, and I've tried everyone else. Tell me and I'll put in a word for you at headquarters. Man, you have the detective's eye, the shrewdness—"

Eager drew forth the fact that the Worleys were located at the Rowland, suite 34, and that eight P. M. was a good time to call. That very evening he entered the apartment house, and took the elevator to the third floor. The formality of announcing his presence through the hotel office was one that he dispensed with. Doubtless Mrs. Worley could very readily summon a sick headache, and sick headaches are never improved by the thought of paying an unwelcome bill.

Rapping at the door, Eager, waiting a moment, heard a rustling within and soon a voice responded in measured tones: "Who is there and what do you wish?"

"Mrs. Worley, I have a little matter of business on which I desire to see you. Can you kindly come to the door?" The collector's voice was positively mellow in its friendly quality and produced the desired result. Swinging the door open wide, Mrs. Worley invited him to step inside.

Billy Eager noted the luxurious furnishings of the suite, trimmed in mahogany, with velvet carpets of a deep green richness. But particularly he noted the woman. He did not wonder at the ease with which she twisted credit men around her fingers. Of commanding figure and presence, she looked forth upon the world, as if it owed her a superior living—and she meant to take it. Her features were full, a suggestion of a double chin indicating the quality and richness of her diet. Her eyes were of the appraising kind, quick to comprehend, and capable of flashing fire on provocation. Above all, she was stately and of seeming dignity, behind which the collector deemed she could readily retreat in case of emergency. He would create the emergency.

"I called upon you," Billy Eager began in his most pleasing tones, noting as he talked the pale green crêpe meteor she wore, which he presumed was the one of the Lisbon shop, unpaid for, "in regard to a matter, a trifle delicate in its nature and yet one that I know you will respond to in a spirit of courtesy and friendliness." He was watching her carefully as he laid his foundation, but she remained politely indifferent, as if waiting for the nub of his business. "My mission is that of a mediator, if I may say, in the adjusting and settling of accounts. At the present moment I have a bill of the Lisbon Fashion Shop."

"Yes?" she interrogated noncommittally.

"Now, I want you to tell me just what is the best we can expect, bearing in mind an amicable settlement."

Working on the agency's axiom, "Put your debtor in a hole," Eager dug as deeply as he could and awaited her efforts to crawl out.

Mrs. Worley knitted her brows, as if puzzling the proper course to pursue. In no sense did she lose her poise, however, and Eager rightly judged she was fortified for the unexpected. She unbent a little and began in fluent tones: "Let me tell you a little of my circumstances. First I may say I intend to pay all my honest bills, and this one of the

Lisbon, while an excessive charge, a very excessive charge, shall be paid. This gown, as you can well see, is not wearing as it should; for a $65 garment you know as well as I, that it is far too shabby."

Eager felt a sudden depression. She was meeting him on his own ground, as a clever debtor always does. The gown showed little signs of wear, and he knew it; but he could only nod assent as she continued: "Now, my affairs are somewhat involved, and I have run up more debt than I really believed. At present I am behind, but I am arranging for sums of money which should arrive in two or three months."

It was as familiar as "Home, Sweet Home," to the collector, and it angered him. He abruptly changed his course. "Mrs. Worley, it won't do. No, not at all. I came expecting a payment, here and now, and I mean business!"

A flash of anger slowly mounted Mrs. Worley's cheeks; she drew herself to her full height, and with an air of superiority replied coldly: "There is no reason why I should humiliate myself to go into the details as to why, at this particular moment, I cannot pay this bill; but as you are so insistent, I shall refer you to my husband. Here is his business address."

The following day Eager called at the Hellman building and was ushered into a well-furnished office, the outer door of which bore a number of company names, beneath which was the brief legend, "R. H. Worley, Business Chances."

Accepting an invitation to be seated, Eager began optimistically: "I hope business is brisk with you. Selling much?"

"Rather quiet, an occasional small deal; stationery store, cigar stand—nothing big." Worley was a prosperously-dressed individual, groomed in the very best of taste, slightly stout, but with a rather narrow face from out of which glinted beady eyes that analyzed keenly.

"Your wife sent me to see you," announced the collector.

Worley started slightly, then quickly regained his composure.

"Yes? What does she ask me to do for you?"

"She owes a bill of $350 for clothes. She referred me to you."

"My wife sent you to me to pay a bill?" and Worley hopped from his chair as if in astonishment. "To pay *her* bill?" he concluded, breaking into a smile of seeming incredulity.

"Why not? Not a strange circumstance. Husbands frequently pay their wives' bills; in fact, it is a recognized custom."

"You please to be facetious. This appeals to me differently. I never pay my wife's accounts. She has her own money and is amply able to meet her liabilities. I am surprised, very much surprised, and annoyed, you understand, annoyed. Will you kindly excuse me? This conversation does not appeal to me."

The bill collector was nonplussed. Neither end of the Worley combination showed any marked inclination to pay. The superior Mrs. Rhoades Hathaway was equally as loath to remit as the plainer Mr. R. H.

Bill Eager adopted his aggressive tone. "I am making no progress. Let's get down to cases. Your wife said she was financially embarrassed, that you were the proper person to see. Legally you are both liable."

Worley wheeled in his chair. "Kindly do not use the word 'legally' in my presence. Mrs. Worsley has been trifling with you."

"'Trifling' and Mrs. Worley do not set well together."

"Go back to her and demand payment. She will not refuse you."

The collector hesitated. "Would you give me a note in writing, embodying the suggestion?"

"Certainly," and he penned the lines: "Mrs. Worley: I regret your lack of tact in harassing me with a bill collector, when you are provided with so liberal an

allowance. I am sending him back to you."

"'Harassing' is an expressive word," commented Eager.

The collection appeared far from rosy. Surface indications suggested a breach between the parties in interest. This, added to the rapid mobility of Mrs. Worley in traveling, decided the collector to a course of rapid and, if need be, drastic action. He phoned the agency's local mercantile company, a very up-to-date institution, to make a careful search of all "Notices of Sale" in which Worley's name appeared as agent.

That very evening found Eager again at the door of Suite 34. His knuckles briskly rapped the paneling, and, changing his voice, he announced: "Important message. Urgent."

She responded quickly, but stopped suddenly on recognizing the unexpected visitor. "How dare you return?" she began indignantly.

"The message, read it. It's self-explanatory."

She skimmed the lines. "Of all the mortifying and unbelievable things my husband has ever done, this is the limit. You go right back to him with my answer," and she pulled down her writing desk.

Billy Eager, a disciple to duty, was taking careful and minute observation of the premises, with a view to appraising and remembering visible chattels. What chattels there might be were carefully concealed, however, not even a trunk being in sight. But Eager did notice, as she displayed surface contents of the desk, a number of bills of ancient vintage lying within sight. He made a mental note of their contents.

"Running errands is not listed among my duties, Mrs. Worley," Eager announced. "Now, it's time we came to an understanding. We have rather broad attachment laws in this state; I may be compelled to resort to extreme measures."

"But you can't do it! Clothes are necessaries and exempt," she shot back.

"Ah, I see; you have been looking up the legal end. That always indicates something. But, Mrs. Worley, I do not wish to follow so disagreeable a course; I want the money, not the goods."

She changed her attitude. "My husband"—she hesitated—"is he not also liable for the bill?"

"Possibly," answered the collector evasively.

"Won't you, as a favor to me," and she smiled amiably, "try him just once again? I will write just a line appealing to him. He will pay you, I know."

"I will try, this once," Eager acquiesced.

The Worleys were sparring for time. Billy Eager knew there was not a moment to be lost. He phoned his office for consultation and followed with a call to the mercantile agency. He found that Worley had made a number of sales during the month and that his commissions should run somewhere between $400 and $600.

Early the next morning the bill collector appeared at Worley's office and was in time to catch him entering with a suitcase in his hand.

"Traveling, I see," he greeted.

Worley was nettled and rasped back: "I don't care to talk to you this morning."

"Your wife's note. Read it, please."

"I don't see why she persists in sending you to me. Mrs. Worley's financial arrangements do not concern me."

"I have come prepared to sit in your office until you pay," announced the collector. "Legally, morally and by every right I can look to you for payment."

"You can, can you?" snarled Worley. "See here," and he pulled a newspaper clipping from his pocket. It was a notice stating that on such and such a date, following separation, R. H. Worley would pay no bills incurred by his wife.

"You are not divorced?" queried the

collector, studying the new angle suddenly presented, and noting that the date of publication was some time prior to date of Mrs. Morley's purchase.

"No—only separated."

"I see. And do you know, Mr. Worley, that that published notice could probably be knocked out; it usually is—"

"I think not. That would be up to the lawyers."

"Well, I am going," announced the debtor after a short silence. "You have my consent to sit in this office as long as you wish. Physicians recommend periods of solitude for relaxing the mind."

"Are you taking the morning or afternoon train?" asked Eager, ignoring the remark.

"Judge for yourself," and Worley flung open the door and hurried away.

The bill collector reviewed the situation. The odds seemed very much in favor of the debtors, as they always are. There are no visible evidences of fraud. The clothes, being far in excess of actual necessity, probably were attachable, but the collector had no tangible spoils upon which a constable could get his official claws. No collector can proceed legally without something to proceed on. The one encouraging fact lay in the probability that Worley possessed ready money.

The collector was convinced of one theory. Mrs. Worley would spend as brief a time as possible in her present quarters. He decided to spend the morning at the Rowland.

He made a hurried trip over to the apartment house, planted himself in a favorable position and bowed his head in deep perusal of the sporting page of a newspaper.

Within a few minutes, among its passengers the descending elevator brought Mrs. Worley, who hastened to the desk. Eager surmised that she was asking for her bill, for soon she drew from her hand-bag a roll of bills of considerable thickness, from which she extracted several notes and handed them to the cashier. He caught her parting words as she turned back to the elevator: "If a gentleman calls, send him up."

The sight of the bills shot a thrill through the collector. It always did. He made a vow that he would become intimately acquainted with that crisp, crackling stack of new bills.

Mrs. Worley had scarce gone to her apartment when her husband entered. Eager was puzzled for the moment, and then the full purpose of the couple flashed upon him. He ducked his head into the printed schedule of the National League, studying it devoutly. Worley first went to the desk and was then directed to the elevator.

The collector studied his plan of action. The prey was trapped upstairs; for the first time he could interview them jointly and with the advantage of knowing that they were amply supplied with money. But he would need strategy. For several moments he pondered, and then an idea, full blown, struck him with forceful appeal. He thanked his good fortune for an accurate memory. He hastened to the telephone and communicated for some moments with his office.

Traversing the now familiar stretch of carpet from the elevator to suite 34, the bill collector pounded loudly on the door. An involuntary feminine gasp answered, followed by a more definite masculine "S-h-h." No one came to the door, and the collector pounded again. Several efforts were unavailing, and the bill man retreated to the rear of the hall.

Half an hour later he rapped again. After a brief interval, Mrs. Worley appeared at the door. "You amazing bill collector!" she stormed forth. "Once and for all I will not be persecuted by you. I shall phone the Police Department."

"Not the police, Mrs. Worley; surely you are the last person to desire an acquaintance with them. Surely no. Tell Mr. Worley I wish to speak to him."

"Mr. Worley!" she gasped.

"Is in your room now. Kindly produce him." The collector secured a good foothold in the entrance.

The husband came forth, slightly ruffled in appearance and smiling a bit sheepishly.

"Mr. Worley, I understood you and your wife were separated. Doubtless you have settled your differences and are a happy little family again."

"Yes—ah—yes. We are now reconciled."

"And are planning a little trip together?"

"A few days' trip. Back again later," replied Worley.

"Now, why did you publish that notice of separation?" the collector demanded.

"I have the right. I did not wish to be annoyed by Mrs. Worley's bills. I do not want collectors running in and out of my office."

"You would prefer to have them running from one hotel to another, back and forth, taking long chances on what they can find."

Mr. Worley took a dignified stand. "Any civil right you have against me you can enforce."

Eager resolved to try a novel experiment. Once it had worked, and it always made him feel warm within. It presented the better side of the collection business. Perhaps there was good in the Worleys and an appeal to the better nature of the pair might be effective. The collector's voice suddenly changed to one of earnestness.

"Mr. and Mrs. Worley," he began, speaking slowly and quietly, "you probably do not grade agency bill collectors very high when there is a question of principle involved. We are generally credited with fighting fire with fire." He paused a moment and then continued impressively: "You two are now facing a crisis in your lives. Speaking plainly, you are now at the point where you are either going straight or crooked."

Worley gave a little involuntary movement, but relaxed again, and the collector proceeded: "That notice of separation is a false notice, which you, Worley, may have given for the reasons you state; more likely with a background intent to defraud. When people get to the point where they want to beat their bills, they are getting their first crooked impulses. Do you want voluntarily to travel the road to felony?"

Worley's little eyes blinked. A moral dose from a bill collector came as a decided shock to him.

"We can't pay," he answered after an interval. "We have nothing to pay with."

"Every debtor says that. I want you to pay because it is the right thing to do. What is your decision?"

"It is to laugh," instantly answered Mrs. Worley. "Grand little inference of yours that we have money; and your little prayer-meeting exhortation on honesty—bah!"

The bill collector's mouth snapped ominously. His best motives usually were misjudged.

"All right; you can't get out of this hotel and to the station short of a riot!"

"Violence it is, then?" said Worley. "Our busy little collector is prepared to make a scene or two. Well—"

Proceedings were suddenly interrupted by a tapping at the door. The Worleys welcomed the respite. But only for a moment.

As Mrs. Worley stood in the doorway a voice was clearly wafted in to Worley and Eager: "I have a bill I wish to collect."

"And what may yours be?" queried Mrs. Worley, forgetting herself.

"I am from the Briggins Jewelry Company and I have orders to insist on payment to-day. We understand you are leaving town, and $150 is a bit too heavy an account on which to take chances."

"Impossible to pay," returned Mrs. Worley. "Who said I was leaving town?"

"Word given me from the office. I must insist that you let me take a look at your apartments. Is Mr. Worley here?"

She parried the question. "If you will call next week I may be able to do something."

"I asked if Mr. Worley was here?" said the collector.

"He is."

"Well, I will come in," and he pushed himself forward into the apartment. "Now, which of you gentlemen is Mr. Worley?"

"I am not," volunteered Eager; "and, by the way, let me say that I overheard your gentle message at the door. Will you kindly wait outside a moment?"

"Competition, I see," returned the collector. "But wait a minute. Why not join forces? Two duns are better than one. By the way, did you run across a notice of separation? This looks more like perfect unity and peace. I gather the notice is false—intent to defraud, perhaps."

At the mention of the notice, Mr. and Mrs. Worley simultaneously shuddered.

"Our firm heard from reliable sources that you have money," continued the new collector, addressing the debtors, "and I am under order to spend the day here if necessary."

Billy Eager grinned. "Birds of a feather, we. Identical mission. Make yourself comfortable."

The two collectors, simulating perfect ease, chatted along for a few moments, ignoring the Worleys, who were somewhat in a quandary as to best means of meeting the situation.

Finally, Mrs. Worley gathered to herself all her dignity, drew her person to a majestic height and commenced a withering diatribe: "I can construe this unwarranted intrusion only in the light of an insult. For men, who pretend to be gentlemen, to enforce their demands in this brutal manner and to override all principles of common decency—"

Her discourse was interrupted by a gentle rapping on the door, and she was compelled again to extend the courtesies common to a civilized community by greeting the newcomer.

"Ah, Mrs. Worley, the first time I have met you, though I have tried hard and often. I am collecting for the Oriental Bazaar."

"Another one!" ejaculated Worley. "Good Lord, they're on—"

"I understood Mr. Worley might be here," continued the voice with polished gentleness. "Can I see you both? You see, we have information that you are traveling, and a matter of one hundred dollars, not heavy, of course, but—"

The third collector bowed himself in. "Visitors, I see. Perhaps a moment privately—"

"Don't stand on ceremony," welcomed Eager. "Quite a family party here. Make yourself at home. We're all getting confidential. How much did you say your house was extending the financial courtesy for?"

"I fail to comprehend. Reputable people, we thought. Of course, we saw that notice of separation and I see no signs of conjugal discord. Could it be the notice was false, with—er—fraudulent intent?"

The family of Worley was fast weakening under the withering attack, and the usually well-barricaded dignity of Mrs. Worley was bearing up but poorly under the collectors' combined storm.

Worley sought conciliatory measures: "You gentlemen are catching me under adverse conditions. Now, if I could only have a little time, say until this afternoon, I might raise some money. Can you help me to that extent?"

"I should like to be obliging," replied Eager; "but with two rivals in the field, I would not dare release my advantageous position. Possibly the other gentlemen can leave—"

"Not on your life. We want our share. There may not be enough to go around; we, of course, expect our pro rata—"

"After mine is paid in full," pointed out Eager.

"That's not fair," returned the Bazaar representative. "We are all working hard on this—"

Again came a summons at the door, a sizable pounding this time, and Mr. and Mrs. Worley both responded.

"At last I catch you—and together," came an ugly voice. "Planning the get-away together. You would beat Carter's eighty-dollar bill, would you! Let me in! I want to take an inventory."

The latest arrival, a strapping big fellow, of the bull-dog type, shoved the pair before him and pushed his way to the assembled group in the rear. "Who are these fellows?" he thundered; "fellow conspirators?"

"They are all bill collectors," said Worley weakly.

"Then I'm among friends. Looks like a raid. Any police officers present?"

"Not to our knowledge," said one.

"Thought there might be. I got ahold of one of these notices; looks like some fraud somewhere."

The rain of collectors, with the deadly inference of fraudulent intent implied by each and every one, filled the Worleys with a real terror.

"Gentlemen, if we only had the money we would pay you all. But we can't—really we cannot," pleaded Mrs. Worley.

"We have barely enough to subsist on," added her husband.

Billy Eager rose to his feet. "That won't do, Mr. Worley. What's the use of the poorest stall of all. Gentlemen"—turning to his brother collectors—"they have between $400 and $600 in ready money, real cash! At this moment, in Mrs. Worley's bag, is a stack of bills large enough to make our mouths water."

"Is there enough to go around?" asked the fourth man. "I propose we divide it."

"No. Most decidedly no," said Eager aggressively. "I dug up most of the information. My account should be paid in full and the rest pro rated."

Words argumentative and disputative passed back and forth, and finally were withheld barring inventory.

After considerable urging, Worley turned his pockets inside out, scattering some $150, and Mrs. Worley's bag was spread upon the table, revealing $400 more. For several minutes the four collectors regarded the sight with proper consideration and then fell to arguing again.

Billy Eager pleaded long and persuasively, and finally the big, burly collector thundered out: "Oh, give him his way. He's right. He's also right in recommending mercy on these people. Give them fifty to run on."

And so it was settled, receipts passed around and the Worley's comforted to the full extent that four happy men could comfort.

That afternoon four bill collectors, the entire ouside force of the Quick Action Agency, gathered in the office of J. McNutt.

"Quite some haul, $500, gentlemen," he congratulated.

"Credit Billy Eager," said the big, burly member. "His splendid memory, and his eyes. To get the names at the tops of those four bills and the correct amounts while carrying on his conversation with Mrs. Worley, is, in my opinion, grasping opportunity."

"I can see a bill a mile off. It's instinct, not ability," said Eager modestly.

"I am placed in rather a delicate position," observed J. McNutt. "Here we have the Lisbon account in full, but in addition we hold $150 due three firms for whom I am not authorized to collect. Technically, I could be held on a criminal charge."

"Your reputation is a guarantee as to your motives," said Eager. "Those credit managers will fall on your neck, and no questions will be asked."

J. McNutt wrote three letters, one to the Briggins Jewelry Company, one to the Oriental Bazaar and one to Carter's,

stating in each that he had seen an unusual opportunity to make an advantageous collection from parties about to skip the city, and remitting the amount due. In concluding, he solicited the valued business of each firm and gave references, financially gild edged.

The three credit men made no offer to return the money. Instead, each and every one shot back a letter urging special effort to collect the balance, and extending invitation to call and talk over the suspense accounts.

One week later, J. McNutt phoned the credit manager of the Lisbon Fashion Shop. "You want a report, no doubt. I've made a few real quick-action collections this time: Arland, $125; Harper, $185; Jones, $250; and Mrs. Worley, $350."

"Good business. Congratulations. Got it over quick. Work is fine on all except Mrs. Worley. Really, I shouldn't have given you that account; it would have come in in due course. Will look for you very soon. Good-by," and J. McNutt heard the click as Lyons hung up the receiver.

"Why is a credit manager?" he muttered disconsolately.

DONOVAN'S DAY

By ANNIE BATTERMAN LINDSAY

SUBTERRANEAN fires had wrought, with clamor and convulsion, to upheave Sugarloaf through the shattered crust; and in the fissures around its base Plutus had sifted in the golden-spangled quartz. All in order that Donovan might have his day.

Through the ages, the conical peak stood sentinel at the cañon's mouth, dominating the desert plain below, and waiting without impatience for Donovan.

On one side a corrugated ridge of basalt, like a cock's comb, traversed the inaccessible symmetry of the cone, so that Donovan should not fail to be lured to his preordained fate.

At last he came, six feet of man, singing as he trudged, grub-stake and gold-pan on his back, a prospector's hammer in his hand, with which he knocked on Plutus's door.

"Come in! I've been expecting you a long time," said Plutus.

But a quartz proposition needs money—a dollar in for every dollar out, they say. So Donovan was soon off again with his little sack of samples; and between his samples and his persuasive tongue, mellowed by just a reminiscence of brogue, succeeded in interesting the floating capital of Ernest Seagrave, Esquire, and some of his friends.

Then at the foot of Sugarloaf there was clamor and bustle; the silence of the ages was disturbed by the voices of men, clanking of loaded wagons, hammering and riveting and blasting; and finally by the puffing of steam and clatter of stamps.

When the work had progressed thus far, Mr. Seagrave, who had never seen a mine of any sort, thought he would go out and have a look at his own. In due time, this happy inspiriation eventuated in a big touring car finding its way to Sugarloaf; no difficult feat, for there was a plain road now, with many coming and going on it.

From the touring car, alighted Mr. Seagrave and his guests, Miss Angel and her father. And this was the beginning of Donovan's day.

The tourists were conducted through the workings, underground and above. Miss Angel, her blonde hair and svelte figure eclipsed under a miner's hat and oilskin coat, a tin candlestick in her hand, was the most alert investigator of the three; so from the beginning of the tour, it was she who walked first in line after Superintendent Donovan, she to whom his explanatory conversation was most directly addressed.

When they came out of the depths, they found a deputation waiting them to invite the strangers to investigation of new developments further up the cañon. The presence of Eastern investors "in our midst" was an opportunity not to be overlooked by the owners of prospect holes yawning for capital. There was no road feasible for an auto beyond this point, but the transportation department had provided some nags. None of them, however, was furnished with a side-saddle, and Miss Angel passed up the proposition. She watched her father and Mr. Seagrave take their departure up the trail, and then looked about her to see if there were promise of more exciting amusement for the next two or three

hours than the chapters of the half finished novel lying on the seat of the machine seemed likely to afford. Old Sugarloaf was there, ready and waiting. This was the day and the hour.

"What an inaccessible-looking little peak!" remarked Miss Angel. "Did any one ever climb it?"

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Donovan. "But not from this side."

"There must be a fine view from the top," hinted Miss Angel.

"Magnificent!" replied Donovan with enthusiasm.

"How long would it take?" inquired Miss Angel.

"About two hours to go up, and half as long to come down. Will you try it? It would be worth your while if you admire scenery."

"Of course I admire scenery!" returned the lady.

The trip thus far had been a distinct disappointment to Miss Angel. She had come to the wild and woolly West and not a single thing had happened out of the ordinary. She had not met with a bear or a bandit, a cowboy or a cloudburst. At least here was a mountain and a man—a very handsome man. She embraced the opportunity presented.

Donovan led his guest to a narrow trestle that spanned the gulch where the waste rock was being dumped. A single board lay between the rails for the man who pushed the car to walk on, and Miss Angel was expected to cross on this, above the dizzy gulf. For a moment she hesitated.

"Can't you do it?" inquired Donovan. "It will save a mile of hard walking."

"Yes, I can," said she, and advanced upon the board.

One-eyed Billy, who was holding his car waiting for them to pass, looked after her appreciatively with his single orb.

"This is your day, Misther Donovan," he said to his boss as he went by. No offense was meant; his employer took none.

"It's the day of me life," he answered.

"Beg pardon?" inquired Miss Angel, turning her head.

"I was telling this fellow that it would be worth his life if he dumped any rock over this trestle before we were off it," said Donovan.

They crossed without difficulty, Bertha walking quickly with eyes straight ahead, as Donovan bade her.

They then ascended the slope of the opposite hill until they came to the head of the ravine; here they crossed back again on a hog's-back ridge, which was almost as ticklish work as the trestle, and found themselves well up on the peak of Sugarloaf. They had taken their time, and Bertha had beguiled the way by "drawing out" her companion. Donovan knew what he was there for and allowed himself to be drawn out effectively; what his conversation lacked in solid fact, it made up for in piquancy and picturesqueness; he told his stories well and did credit to his upbringing. And he *was* so handsome!

"How I could love you," thought Bertha, "if you were only one of my kind! What a pity, what a pity, that this should be going to waste in a desert!"

Nevertheless, when one of his narratives seemed to be tending toward levititious mention of his partner, whom he referred to as "Percy Vere de Vere with the bicycle lamp" (Mr. Seagrave wore a monocle), she sounded a note of warning.

"Be a little careful, Mr. Donovan, if you please," she said.

Donovan paused abruptly.

"Is he anything to you?" he asked, bluntly.

"I am engaged to him," she answered as bluntly.

"He is a good fellow," said Donovan, loyally. "We all laugh at each other out here, you know."

Miss Angel sighed unconsciously. She had no fault to find with Mr. Seagrave. He was a nice man of his sort; but the

vintage seemed a little thin at the moment.

Donovan caught the sigh.

"You are tired?" he asked.

Bertha protested that she was not, but he insisted that she sit down and rest.

"The worst is yet to come," he said.

Miss Angel culled one of the sunflowers with which the whole mountainside was gilded, and plucked the leaves, daisy-wise, repeating the foolish patter.

"He loves me not," she concluded, and cast the ravished stem away.

"Then he is a lost fool," said Donovan. "But don't you know," he added, "it would require a good deal of a man to love you."

The young lady looked startled. To be sure, she had been treating the blue-shirted miner perfectly as one of her own kind, but she feared that she had gone a little too far, in that he seemed entirely unaware of any condescension on her part in doing so. Still, she encouraged him to proceed by saying doubtfully, "Is that complimentary or otherwise?"

"Any man, not blind," continued Donovan, regarding her thoughtfully, "could love you with his eyes. And a fine gentleman like my pardner could love you with his sense of fitness, and be sure you would never discredit it. And a clever man could love you with his mind —if he were clever enough not to be jealous of yours. But none of them could love—*you!*"

Bertha looked at him with something resembling fright in her eyes. To the primitive woman in her, smothered deep under the veneer of civilization, this son of the solitudes dared to appeal boldly, sure of his ground. How did he know? How did he *know!* She arose, breathing rather quickly.

"We will never reach the top, if we don't go on," she suggested.

As Donovan had said, the worst was yet to come; but with his aid she surmounted it without too much difficulty, and they stood upon the summit.

The cone afforded, as she had been promised, a magnificent outlook. Although a mere baby among peaks, in comparison to the giants ranged behind it, its shape, its isolation, and its location at the mouth of the cañon and on the rim of the desert, combined to give it a commanding position.

On one side, they looked up the gorge to an elemental chaos of snowy heights; turning to the other, the vision spanned vast spaces and reached yet other ranges, blue upon the horizon.

Directly at their feet, seeming near enough to drop a stone down the smoke-stack of the mill, was the spot from whence they had climbed.

"It looks so close!" said Bertha. "And to think of all the distance we have to go to get back! Did no one ever go down this side?"

"Not that I know of," Donovan replied.

The face of the slope was clearly impracticable, not only from its steepness, but because it was entirely covered by sharp-edged shards and flakes of rock from the size of an arrow-head to that of a dinner-plate. But Bertha thought she descried a way.

"It almost seems as if we could go down there among those rocks," she suggested. Her eyes were on the comb which has been mentioned as ridging one side of the peak.

Donovan considered it.

"We might if we had the nerve," he said. "But it's only fair to warn you that it would be a good deal more difficult than it looks from here."

"Let's try it," insisted Bertha. "If it's not feasible we can come back and go around."

"It may not be feasible to come back," predicted Donovan.

"You're afraid!" she taunted.

"Afraid that I would get some place with you where I couldn't get back!" exclaimed Donovan.

And that should have stopped her, you

say, if she had been a nice girl. But, you see, it was only for one day; and she had been so bored for three weeks.

They picked their way down to the beginning of the ledge, and clambered out upon it. It was pretty easy going at first. Bertha was a natural born mountaineer, clear-headed, sure-footed, able to choose quickly and take advantage of every foothold and handhold; she had on a sensible short skirt and fairly stout boots; though she soon saw ruefully that this was to be their finish.

And Donovan's hand was always ready, sure as the rock itself. Having acquitted his conscience by warning her against the adventure, he treated it now as a perfectly commonplace one. He helped her down, step by step, with no more apparent sense of anything unusual in the situation than if he were assisting her to alight from a trolley car.

So they went along finely until they had accomplished about a third of the descent. The enterprise had been so easy that it seemed to render ridiculous the timorousness with which it had been approached.

But now a step intervened beyond the reach of even Donovan's searching foot. He swung down by his hands and felt about for a toehold; having discovered one at last, he swung the other foot out into space and found a support for it on a small pinnacle. He let go above and braced himself, one leg straightened horizontally against the face of the rock. Below him a few inches was a little shelf, narrow but sufficient.

"Come!" he said, holding up his arms. "Put your foot on my leg, there, and your hands on my shoulders and I will swing you down on a good place that I see below here."

His tone was perfectly matter-of-fact, but Bertha drew back, dismayed, both at the idea of the contact and at the seeming impossibility of his maintaining his precarious balance under her added weight.

"Oh, you can't!" she said, voicing one-half her reason. "I am not a fairy, Mr. Donovan, and you have no foothold."

"A perfectly good one," he responded. "You're not a quitter, are you?"

Bertha still hesitated. This was the Rubicon. From where she stood, she could still go back, but once over that verge, there would be no going back. And who knew what lay beyond? Donovan knew perfectly, but was not telling.

"It may get worse and worse," she murmured.

"Well, at the worst," said Donovan, cheerfully, "there are plenty of men and ropes down below there. We have only to holler."

It began to look like a real adventure. With a delicious thrill of excitement, the so-bored Miss Angel crouched down, put one foot on Donovan's thigh, where he had told her, and her hands on his shoulders.

"Don't be afraid," said Donovan, reassuringly, and placing his hands firmly on her waist, he swung her easily down to the place he had selected, and followed after her. She was pale and trembling all over, not only because she had been a little frightened, but because a descent is more trying than an ascent, and her unaccustomed muscles were beginning to assert their fatigue. But Donovan ignored these first symptoms of a breakdown.

"See how easy," he remarked. "You won't be afraid to trust yourself to me next time." And he began looking about him for another step. Then she made a discovery.

"It is just more of the same," she cried, looking at him reproachfully.

"It does look like it, doesn't it?" said Donovan. "But we have to go on now; we can't go back." And they went on in the same way. Donovan would find a foothold, brace himself, she would place her foot on his knee or his thigh, her hands on his shoulders, or around his neck, if the case were very bad, and he

would take her in his arms, and put her down on some little vantage point, and find another for her hand to cling to until he had swung himself down again. And then the performance would be repeated. When she had once tested the strength of his muscles and the surety of his clasp, she no longer doubted his ability to get her safely down. When he said, "Ready now!" or "Come!" his steady eye held her nerve steady for that time. After that first occasion, she had no feeling of prudery in giving herself to him, for he handled her as if she were a package, a precious one most certainly, but one without any human appeal. She appreciated the perfection of his attitude, and yet she subconsciously resented it. It seemed almost inhuman; she felt as if a little petting would have helped her along wonderfully over that rocky road.

As for Donovan, he kept saying his lesson to himself. Each time he took her in his arms, each time her breath fanned his neck, her hair got into his eyes, or her cheek grazed his, he said to his soul, "She trusts you Donovan! She is helpless! She could not resent it if you held her tight while you covered her face with hot kisses. But if you do it, I'll beat your brains out against the door-jamb when I get you alone."

Nevertheless, there was growing in him momentarily a fierce sense of possession which was likely to set at naught in the end all prior claims and conventions.

And so they came down another third of the way. Then a roomy shelf, which was almost a platform, seemed to offer opportunity for a brief intermission of the strain upon nerve and muscle. But below it was a fearful drop. Bertha looked over at it and her pluck deserted her on the instant. It occurred to her with sudden realization that Donovan must be as tired as she. Even his sinews of steel could not endure such effort indefinitely. This was the place where they were going to succumb at last, and both would be precipitated to destruction together. And what would she look like at the bottom? To be a corpse was bad enough, but to be a scrappy one was beyond endurance. She cast herself down and lay prone with her face pressed into the rock. She would have amalgamated herself with it if she could. She commenced to cry; she had been wanting to do it for a good while. Donovan saw that, exactly as he had foreboded, panic had seized her just as soon as he allowed her a moment's respite from exertion. He looked at her helplessly.

"It's no use, no use," she sobbed. "Save yourself and leave me here to die! I deserve it!"

"Of course you do and of course I will," said Donovan. "But it's funny how I seem to hanker after dying myself since you told me that about Percy—I beg your pardon!—Seagrave." He sighed.

Bertha made no reply. Perchance, she was waiting to see if here was the man who knew how to love her. But Donovan was still saying his lesson to himself; so instead of comforting her after the manner of his longing, he sat down and swung his feet over the edge.

"Oh, *don't!*" she cried, shuddering and pressing her face again to the rock from which she had lifted it almost imperceptibly to peep at what he was doing. He laughed and commenced telling her a funny story. At length, he had her smiling; she sat up and took off her hat and began to reassure herself as to hairpins. Then Donovan suddenly flattened himself out on the rock, dug his toes into a crevice, gritted his teeth, and before she guessed what he was going to do, swept her from her seat and swung her over the edge. She screamed and clung to him, as he leaned over, his arms stretched to the utmost, supporting her full weight.

"Let go!" he said. "There is a good place not six inches from your toes. It means your life, dear! My foot is slipping!"

She let go then and found herself still

alive, much to her surprise, and not in fractional parts.

"Here is your hat," Donovan said, placidly, handing it to her, and then swung himself down beside her and faced her anger. She was white and quivering.

"Oh, you brute!" she breathed. *"You brute!"*

"But you're down!" retorted Donovan, exultantly.

"You did not have to treat me that way!" she exclaimed, examining her reddened wrists. Donovan took them both in one hand and chafed them tenderly with the other. He refrained from kissing them, but he looked into her eyes and said irrelevantly:

"Is that wedding coming off soon?"

"It—the day is not set yet," Bertha admitted, averting her glance.

"Then," said Donovan, "I have a presentiment that it is not going to be." The descent was practically accomplished now. They skirted the base of the ledge, because it was easier to clamber along it than to make their way over the flinty talus at its foot. Suddenly, just beneath them, some invisible person shouted, "All set!"

"Oh, my God!" said Donovan. He caught the girl and threw her down upon the ground at the bottom of the rock wall, and bent his body above her.

"Lie still! Lie still, darling!" he implored her, as she struggled in his grasp, believing him gone suddenly mad. He was near madness, it is true, for when he heard that shout, he had remembered for the first time that on that very morning he had set a shift of men at work to excavate a place for an extension of the mill. That warning cry meant that a battery of blasts was about to be discharged almost beneath their feet. And while Bertha fought to free herself, they commenced to go off. As a shower of debris from the first one pattered about them, the second went off; then four more.

When Bertha recovered consciousness, she felt a heavy weight on her chest; she discovered that it was Donovan's body, lying inert across hers. She pushed at him, feebly at first, then savagely, fighting for a chance to breathe. When she succeeded in lifting him, he rolled over on his back and lay still, his head down hill. She sat up and looked at him and slowly began to comprehend what had happened. Then she saw a stream of crimson fluid stealing over the rock a little distance before it sank away out of sight. After watching it stupidly for a while, she felt a dawning curiosity as to whence it came, and followed it with her eye to its source. Then she saw that it was welling out of a jagged hole just below the man's ear. The discovery galvanized her into life.

She sprang to him, searching frantically for something to stanch the dreadful flow. Her handkerchief seemed a paltry dam as she pressed it between the jagged lips of the wound and essayed to hold them together over it.

"Donovan! Donovan!" she cried. (She had never heard his baptismal name.) "Don't die! I love you! I love you! Oh, *can't* you hear? I love you!"

She rained kisses upon his pallid face.

His lids fluttered. They lifted. Through his filming eyes, his soul spoke to hers across the abyss.

"I was the man who knew how to love you. Remember me!" his look said.

"If he had only kissed me, just once!" she grieved, her head lying on his lifeless breast, her heart confounded with a bitter sense of eternal, never-to-be-compensated loss.

But Donovan had had his day.

HILLIGOSS

By LOUIS ST. JOHN

WHEN the Citizens' party nominated Hilligoss for mayor of Manitou many townspeople declared it was a shame, a gross violation of the eternal fitness of things. Others said he was all right even if he was a public hackman who wore green-and-yellow livery as an advertising dodge to attract a little more than his share of the tourist patronage. Others laughed.

Hilligoss himself laughed. Beyond doubt, his laugh was the loudest of any. He regarded his nomination as a joke; but he liked a good joke, and he was determined to see this one through.

He had not dreamed of being nominated. Neither had his friends even considered it. He had a candidate of his own—John Bowen, an honest contractor, whose chief claim to fame was the fact that he had been deported from Cripple Creek in the strenuous Western Federation days. Hilligoss worked hard for his man in the convention and stood a good chance of landing him when Bowen had a paralytic stroke.

Then the trouble began. Who would make the right candidate for mayor? The delegates quarreled and the convention split into factions. The Citizens' party was composed largely of "outs," reformers, small taxpayers and rooming-house keepers. That very spring it had come into being with the avowed purpose of saving Manitou. Its platform was: "Something is Wrong." It had two slogans: "Manitou for the Middle-class Tourist," and "Down with Ed Mason."

When bedlam turned loose in the convention, someone jumped up, and in shrieking tones proposed John Hilligoss as the Citizens' candidate for mayor. The delegates were struck dumb. Then they laughed. Then a man shouted: "I second the nomination! Hilligoss is the man. He's a hackman and every summer meets ten times as many tourists as any of the rest of us. He knows what the tourists want and how to get it for them. He's a square man, a big man, even if he ain't fancy, and if anybody can drive Ed Mason out of Manitou politics that fellow is Hilligoss!" This swept the convention off its feet. Before anybody could draw a second breath Hilligoss was made the nominee.

Choking with laughter, he was bundled up front to make a speech. "Friends," he said, "if it's a joke, the joke's on you. For I'm going to run. Then if I'm elected the joke will be on Ed Mason. Ed Mason has been the man behind every mayor and other office-holder Manitou has had in the last twenty years, and he's made more money grafting than in running his big hotel. He spends the money of you taxpayers on public improvements in the vicinity of his hotel and lets the rest of the town go to thunder. He advertises Manitou all over the country as a resort fit only for the rich, thus trying to attract the patronage of bloated bondholders to the Mason House. This kind of dodge is scaring the middle-class tourist away from Manitou, and without the patronage of the middle-class tourist, you and I and all our friends, will starve.

"Now, friends, I'm going to run for three reasons: I want to rid Manitou

politics of the pestiferous Ed Mason; I want to restore Manitou to the middle-class tourist—and to ourselves; and I want to be pointed out on the streets this summer as the mayor-hackman. Think of the boost to my business when tourists know they can be driven around and shown the sights by the mayor of Manitou! Thank you, one and all."

Ed Mason's party, which was composed of the "ins," Democrats and Republicans alike, and the uppers generally, met in convention a week later. It was a perfunctory affair, and Mason's slate went through as usual. The party was nominally Republican; and its creed, the articles of which had been written by the hotel owner, could be summarized in the terse though somewhat uninspiring statement: Manitou Exclusively for the Exclusives. So there would be a real issue in the campaign.

The mayor whose term was expiring was Ed Mason's man, of course. He was a patched-up consumptive who lived in Manitou for his health. He declined a renomination on the ground of worry in office, and Mason chose the wealthy though eccentric Colonel Shelby, late of Kentucky, as the Exclusives' standard bearer.

Colonel Shelby was by no means unknown to local fame. He lived on Aegis mountain in the finest and highest house in town; he had presented the municipality a park and a drinking fountain; and he hated politics. He was in Louisville at the time of his nomination, and it was said that Mason secured his grudging consent to run only after dispatching many urgent appeals by telegraph.

It was affirmed also—by Mason's enemies—that the colonel had been assured that the holding of office would not cause him any inconvenience or take any of his time, as he was expected to be mayor in name only. Although he was gusty and opinionated, he was likable enough personally; but the circumstances of his nomination damned his candidacy.

Mason had no sleepless nights, however. He regarded Hilligoss as a joke. "A mayor in livery?" he queried, puffing his big black perfecto; and then he roared.

Hilligoss felt like a quitter for the first time when he learned that his good friend and patron, Colonel Shelby, was to be his opponent. The idea of running against the man he had driven up and down Aegis mountain every day for a dozen years, filled him with dismay. The colonel had done him many favors; in the off season, when tourists were scarce, he could always be depended upon to take a ride and pay well for it. What would he say when he returned home and found that his friend Hilligoss was to be his rival in the race?

"It's mighty tough," said the driver to his wife. "Colonel Shelby and I have had many a pleasant argumentation going up and down old Aegis mountain; it's too bad he got caught in Ed Mason's snare. But politics is politics; and Manitou must be saved; and people must point me out this summer as the mayor-hackman."

Hilligoss began his campaign immediately after his nomination. He had a great deal of incredulity and downright prejudice to overcome, as the citizens could not reconcile themselves to the thought of their mayor being a mere driver, even if that driver did own his carriage, his horses, his home, and a respectable little bank account. The unfailing good-humor of Hilligoss, his ingenuousness, his readiness to oblige had won him many friends; besides, he was a man of considerable native ability and great public spirit; but the mayor of a fashionable resort like Manitou is supposed to have some conception of the dignity of his office. "He wouldn't make a bad constable," said Ed Mason, who was tickled to death. "But a mayor in livery—!"

"Hadn't you better take it off?" asked Mrs. Hilligoss of her husband.

"I should say not," he answered stoutly. "Don't I need advertising more than ever now? The early tourists have begun to arrive, and we need the money, Sarah. Besides, if I take off my livery now people will say I'm ashamed of my calling, which I ain't."

Hilligoss proved to be a unique campaigner. His own breezy personality was of course his best asset; but he utilized every accessory means to success with gusto. He made the other Manitou-savers on the Citizens' ticket work for him — and incidentally for themselves; he enlisted the enthusiastic support of the hackmen, with whom he was very popular despite the fact that he was in a class by himself when it came to getting the tourist business; he had his wife go calling every afternoon to talk up his candidacy to the women; and he slyly instructed the schoolchildren, who idolized him on account of the countless free rides he had given them, to buttonhole their papas in his behalf.

This was not all. He dived into his pocket and paid out real money to have the town decorated with gorgeous red-and-yellow posters which were made still more hideous with impossible pictures of himself under which were the defiant words: "Down with Ed Mason! I am for Manitou and the Middle-class Tourist!" Then, to crown all, he had Red mountain strung with the name "Hilligoss" in huge letters of white canvas, which could be seen almost as far away as Colorado Springs.

This was sensationalism, but it was also enterprise; and if Hilligoss had employed less spectacular methods Manitou would have been surprised and disappointed. Indeed, if he had confiscated Pike's Peak itself for advertising purposes or painted his smiling likeness on the rocks that formed the gateway to the Garden of the Gods, people would have laughed and said: "What won't Hilligoss do next?"

His campaign was progressing favorably. The Citizens' party, notwithstanding the dubious civic spirit of some of its recruits, had a very vital issue; and Hilligoss talked it even in his sleep. The majority of Manitou voters rented rooms in the summer, and as they had to depend on the middle-class tourist business for a living they were beginning to see that Ed Mason's policy of transforming the town into a western inland Newport would be disastrous to them. The trend of things worried Mason; he had not dreamed that Hilligoss would make such a canvas. So he got busy.

He inspired the Manitou Argus editor, whom he owned, to fiercer attacks on Hilligoss. He put out several hundred poster caricatures of a hackman inscribed with the hair-raising question: "Do You Want a Mayor in Livery?" Through chosen mouthpieces he explained his policy, contending that he was working for a greater Manitou and not a more exclusive one. He had his councilmen, all of whom were up for re-election, make speeches. He opened the beautiful parlors of his hotel for informal discussions. He promised the people that he woud make Manitou the most famous of high-class summer resorts. He reminded them of the faith he had shown in the town by building the handsome Mason House. He appealed to their pride. Hilligoss appealed to their pocketbooks.

One day when no one expected it, Colonel Shelby, Ed Mason's candidate for mayor, returned home from Louisville. A torrential spring rain was falling, and the enterprising Hilligoss—in livery—was the only hackman at the station to meet any chance tourist. Colonel Shelby, picturesque in his big cape overcoat and broad-brimmed black hat, hurried into the carriage with sundry swear words about the weather, warned Hilligoss to see carefully to the waterproof flaps, and then, being comfortably seated, favored the driver with a prodigious handshake.

"By gum, Hilligoss, but you're the

only driver in Manitou who's always on the job. We ought to show our appreciation of you in some public and substantial way. Beastly rain — but how green the mountains are already looking! After all, Manitou is the only place. Any tourists coming in yet?"

"Not many, sir."

"Don't worry; they'll come later. We're bound to have a banner summer. People can't stay away from Manitou; they—" He broke off abruptly, his gaze fastening itself to a billboard in front of them. "Why, what's that?"

"One of your posters, sir."

"One of my—! Oh, I forgot. I *am* running for mayor, eh?" And he laughed heartily. "I'd forgotten all about it, Hilligoss. How's your wife?"

"Very well, thank you, sir."

"Good." He lighted a cigar and gave one to Hilligoss. "I tell you there's nothing like health; it makes a man feel— By gum, Hilligoss, what's *that?*"

They were driving past another billboard. Hilligoss whipped up the horses. "What's what?" he asked innocently.

"That poster. Hold on—what does it say? 'Do You Want a Mayor in Livery?' Livery! D—n 'em! Are they trying to make a flunkey of me?"

"Excuse me, sir, but that's meant to make fun of your opponent."

"My opponent? So I have an opponent then. Why, of course. I didn't think of that. Well, well! Who is the poor fool, Hilligoss?"

Hilligoss swallowed hard: the dreaded moment had come. "I hate to say it, Colonel Shelby, but I'm him.

"You're him?"

"Well, then, he's me."

The colonel's rugged face wore a look of blank amazement. "You run for mayor of Manitou—you, Hilligoss? Who put you up? The hackmen's union? *You* run against *me?* Look here, sir," roared the colonel, "that's nothing but treason, sir—nothing but treason."

"I ain't running against you," explained Hilligoss soothingly, "I'm running against Ed Mason."

"Ed Mason! So I'm nothing but a dummy, eh? If I'm elected Ed Mason will be mayor! Is that what you mean?"

"Ed Mason has been mayor of Manitou for the last twenty years, sir."

"But I'm not Ed Mason!"

"Thank God for that, sir. I just wanted to say—"

But the colonel interrupted him in thunderous tones. "Not another word, sir, not another word!"

They passed by Ed Mason's hotel, the broad piazzas of which were deserted in the storm, and began the ascent of Aegis mountain. Colonel Shelby maintained a stony silence until they reached his house. Hilligoss carried his suitcase up the porch steps.

"Shall I call for you to-morrow morning as usual, sir?" he asked.

"Nobody told you not to," snapped the colonel, slamming the door.

The next morning Hilligoss found him in better humor. There was even the suspicion of a twinkle in his eyes.

"Now, Hilligoss," he said, as they started down the mountain, "tell me all about it."

Hilligoss cleared his throat. "When I accepted the nomination I didn't know you was going to run, sir—"

"I didn't mean that," interrupted the other impatiently. "You have a perfect right to run. As for me, I hate politics. I'm sorry I'm to be mixed up in this infernal mess here. It's all Mason's fault. Now go ahead and tell me why you're running for office."

"Well, Colonel, the conditions demand it," answered Hilligoss slowly and carefully. "Ed Mason has run this town for twenty years; you know that—"

"I don't know anything of the sort," the colonel broke in hotly. "You take too infernally much for granted, Hilligoss. What do I know about Manitou politics? I tell you I despise politics.

Besides, I'm away three-fourths of the the time. Now go ahead and enlighten me."

Hilligoss tried again—this time even more carefully. "Well, Colonel, Ed Mason never allows any public improvements except near his hotel; he won't even let his councilmen—I say *his,* for he owns 'em all—hire a man to water the grass in the park you gave the town, all because the park's three or four blocks from his property.

"But that ain't all," Hilligoss continued, warming up. "Ed Mason is advertising Manitou in a way to scare off all the middle-class tourists. He's so monstrous selfish he don't care if the whole town goes to smash just so he can rope in a few hundred dead swells to stop at his hotel. Now, Colonel, this ain't right. If Ed Mason had his way he'd put nine-tenths of us out of business. Our rooms would be vacant and our carriages empty—he'd have a monopoly with his auto busses. Besides, sir, is it Christianity? Do you think God Almighty planted Pike's Peak here, and the Garden of the Gods, simply for the weary eyes of the rich to look at 'em and then turn up their noses and talk Switzerland? Manitou for the middle-class tourist! That's my slogan."

Colonel Shelby was silent during the rest of the drive down the mountain. When they drew near Ed Mason's hotel he said with a smile:

"Now, Hilligoss, tell me why I ought to be defeated for mayor."

Hilligoss smiled too—his ingenuous, spontaneous smile that was so hard to resist. "Well, sir, I hate to say it, but there ain't one reason why you ought to be elected. Ed Mason could never own *you,* but he'd own the office—don't you see. You hate politics; you're away a good part of the time; and when at home you wouldn't have the patience to be nothing but the mayor of a little town like Manitou. You'd better leave that to a fellow in livery like me."

"Very convincing, Hilligoss. Drop me off here at the Mason House." And the colonel laughed softly as he alighted and walked up the white stone pavement down which Ed Mason was hurrying with a welcoming smile.

Election day drew near and the close of the campaign was marked by feverish activity on both sides. As a result of burning the midnight oil over a manual of speech-making and debate, Hilligoss had taken the stump and made good. His speeches were like the man—they carried conviction; and he made the concession of not appearing in livery. He had called on everybody in town, political foes as well as friends, and promised the aged and infirm to take them to the polls in his carriage. Altogether the outlook for the Citizens' ticket was very encouraging.

Ed Mason was wild—so his enemies said. He realized that his work of twenty years was about to be undone by a herd of mavericks led by a whip-whielder in livery. His lieutenants were fighting hard to stem the tide; but so far he had not prevailed on Colonel Shelby to make a speech. The colonel was not afflicted with stage fright. He was simply afraid he might lose what few votes he might otherwise get, he explained to Mason with a sly wink which Mason did not see.

"Nonsense," the boss answered; "you're the most popular man here. Look at that park you gave the town."

The colonel smiled, then grew serious. "Mason," he said, "why are you running me, anyhow?"

"To beat that flunkey Hilligoss and his down-at-heel crowd. We can make Manitou a high-toned resort if we go about it right."

Colonel Shelby thought a moment. "If I consent to speak will you let me make the kind of speech I want, short or long, and say what I please?"

"Certainly, Colonel; we'll leave that entirely to you."

"All right; it's agreed."

The Exclusives' candidate was advertised to speak the night before election. Ed Mason rented all the halls in town so there could be no counter-attraction, and had a brass band and a colored quartette from Colorado Springs. The hall was packed when the meeting opened. Some of the leading citizens sat on the platform to lend dignity to the occasion; but Ed Mason was discreetly absent.

The chairman had just concluded his preliminary talk and was about to introduce Colonel Shelby when Hilligoss strolled down the aisle hunting a seat. The crowd broke into wild applause. The chairman could not proceed, and Colonel Shelby rose, motioned him to his seat and began his speech without formality.

"Friends!" he thundered; and the noise subsided. "Thank you," he continued pleasantly. "Now I dislike politics and I like political speeches even less; so this one will be pretty short, not more than half a minute in length. First of all I want to say that no man owns me, notwithstanding all reports to the contrary. If you insist on electing me mayor I'll do the best I can for you—but I'm afraid my best wouldn't be very much. I'm away from town a good deal and I'd soon grow tired of holding office. Now, friends, I've looked into the local political situation quite a bit lately and I've come to the conclusion that what Manitou needs is a mayor of the people, by the people and for the people, a mayor who wouldn't take orders from the President of the United States, a mayor who would rather work than eat. If you think I'd make that kind of mayor, why, go ahead and vote for me. As for me, I won't take any chances. To-morrow morning I shall go and cast my humble ballot for John Hilligoss."

Without this speech it would have been a walkover; with it, it was a landslide, a rout.

The day after election as Mayor-elect Hilligoss drove Colonel Shelby up Aegis mountain he said enviously: "I only wish I could make a speech like you, Colonel."

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AT SUNNY MOUNT

By ROGER FISON

OFFICIALS of the mountain division of the S. U. Railroad had a strange habit of creating, suddenly abolishing, then recreating telegraph stations along its two hundred miles of sky-piercing standard gauge rail, in order, as Superintendent Biggs often explained, "to facilitate the rapid movement of tourist and through refrigerator trains over our lines." For the most part, these temporary stations comprised small red painted shacks. Occasionally, however, a rheumatic box car was placed in commission.

This policy on the part of the S. U. naturally attracted to its telegraph department a never-ending stream of restless telegraph operators, who came and went with the regularity of sea waves. Usually, they came singly. On June third, however, the day on which division headquarters at Valley decided to install a temporary "O.S." station at Sunny Mount, a point sixty miles west, two lightning-slingers arrived simultaneously.

These were Terrence McRae and Billy McKay. After many ups and downs over two thousand miles of rail, they landed safely in the Valley yards at noon in box cars U. P. 7644 and S. P. 5899, respectively. Strange to say, neither knew of the other's presence in the Colorado town, until by some queer twist of fortune they came face to face in front of the Dew Drop Inn, a small refreshment hostelry a hundred yards east of division headquarters. They discovered that they were old friends; they had worked a New York stock wire together out of the Chicago Board of Trade. From that moment they became inseparable.

"Before attaching ourselves to a corporation's payroll," suggested Terrence, producing one lone coin, "let us first regale our drooping spirits with several high ones."

Together the two dusty travelers entered Dew Drop Inn, drew nigh unto a friendly counter, and were served. When their last bit of refreshment had disappeared, they headed straight for the S. U. despatcher's office, which was located in a building near the depot. Just before entering, Bill took from the upper portion of his right sock, one celluloid collar. This he quickly attached to the spacious neckband of his sleeveless shirt. Terrence carefully adjusted a greasy black tie and brushed a stray cinder from his coat. The pair then walked boldly into a zone of clattering telegraph instruments.

Ned Sullivan, chief train despatcher at Valley, had in days gone by served as a wire chief in the Chicago Western Union. For skilled telegraphers he had the greatest admiration, and whenever one showed up at Valley, he was pretty sure of a job.

Happening now to look up from a small carload of correspondence that lay on his desk, the chief saw standing at the office railing two of a telegraphic species that immediately attracted his attention. Terrence was the tallest and thinnest operator he had ever seen, and

Bill was the broadest and shortest. Instead of turning them over to his chief clerks for preliminary questioning, as was his custom, Sullivan rose from his chair, waddled across the floor, and greeted the strangers with an inquiring smile.

"We came," explained Terrence, casting a benignant glance at his silent partner, "from 'C. X.' Chicago. We wish employment at some quiet little spot far removed from the baneful influence of the booze shop and the hock shop. In short, sir, we came to this sunny clime to recuperate—to rehabilitate ourselves physically and financially. 'Tis the prohibition ticket for us."

"I get you," grinned the big chief, "and the fact that you hail from my old camping ground weighs in your favor. To tell the truth, you've struck it rather lucky. Sunny Mount telegraph station opens up to-night. It's to be a day and night office. Sunny Mount is nine thousand feet high. The air is fine, fishing is good, and the town is dry. It's a baching job—you live and sleep in the station and cook your own meals. Report trains promptly, copy the train orders, and your seventy-five per month will come regularly. Better get what groceries you want at Mulligan's general store here. You can't get them up there. No. 5 leaves in half an hour. The conductor on that train will have your passes. Good-by, boys."

Terrence and Bill hastened to Mulligan's general store. There they ordered flour, coffee, cornmeal, potatoes, condensed milk, sugar, salt, pepper, canned cornbeef, beans, butter, eggs, bacon, smoking tobacco and baking powder. The bill came to $16.78, which amount was charged to their account. Ned Sullivan had squared matters for them over the 'phone.

"Bill," remarked Terrence rather gloomily as the two started for the depot, "do you think we can learn to cook our own grub?"

"Yes," responded Bill; "I once washed dishes in a restaurant at Minneapolis, and I picked up a few ideas there about cooking. Anyway, this is too good a job to pass up."

At three o'clock that afternoon, two travelers, carrying a heavy gunny sack, alighted from westbound passenger train No. 5 at Sunny Mount.

What they saw was a weather-beaten box car of dull red color, standing on a short spur some ten feet from the main line. It was labelled "SUNNY MOUNT," and contained two windows and one door. This comprised all there was of Sunny Mount.

Too surprised for utterance, Terrence McRae and his old partner dejectedly mounted the shaky steps leading into the box car—22 by number—opened its door and entered.

Two iron wires, the train despatching circuit, entered the car near the roof, dropped down to a tiny switchboard on its wall, and finally terminated at the one telegraph set, a box relay with a sending key, which rested on a rough board table. A package nearby was found to contain "31" train order forms, three signal lanterns, three flags, some carbons and clearance slips. A rusty cook-stove, some dirty kitchen utensils, a can of signal oil, a lamp and a box of coal, stood in one corner, while in the other was a small wooden bunk covered with a straw mattress and containing several blankets. Two soap boxes served as chairs.

No. 5 had already pulled out when the two fully realized that they were the only inhabitants of Sunny Mount. They looked at each other; they looked at their faded clothing; they looked at the bag of provisions from Mulligan's store. Then Terrence walked to the telegraph set and yanked a small plug out of the switchboard.

The lone instrument awoke with convulsive thuds.

"V. D." being the telegraphic call for Valley despatchers' office, the tall oper-

ator began calling that office. V. D. answered promptly.

"What's the call for this superannuated shed on wheels," asked Terrence.

"S. M.," clicked back the unsentimental second trick despatcher.

"Some mansion," echoed Terrence, then O.S.'d (reported) the departed No. 5, and closed the key.

"Bill," said Terrence, turning to his fat partner who was now slowly removing canned goods from the gunny sack, "I guess we'd better try and stick it out, hadn't we? Three months in these hills will put a roll in our jeans that'll stagger our pals back in Chicago. It's really a great opportunity for us."

Bill grunted in the affirmative, and Terrence, having agreed to take the night shift, Bill agreed to work days.

Both suddenly became ambitious. They swept out the dirty car, carried snow water from a nearby spring, and built up a roaring fire in the coal stove. Two hours later they dined sumptuously on canned corned beef mixed with potatoes, coffee with condensed milk (served in tin cups), and queer-looking corn cakes accompanied by syrup made from granulated sugar.

Things got pretty still about eight o'clock that night. Terrence sat by the fire silently smoking his pipe, while Bill, stub pencil in hand, scribbled on a sheet of company paper. Presently Bill stopped.

"Listen to this, Terrence," he said, "a line to some of the boys in Chicago:

'Dear Pals:—
This is some quiet burg. We live in a box car, anchored on a mountain two miles high. Terrence and I are satisfied, though. To-night, we cooked our own grub—no more of that Clark street hash for us. Fellows, we've discovered the ideal life—no booze, no care, just good eats, and seventy-five bucks monthly. We're saving money every minute we're here.'

"Won't that get 'em goin', Terrence?"

"It sure will!" exclaimed Terrence, blowing a peaceful halo of smoke from his stub pipe. "Bill, I never want to leave here. The scenery is marvellous, no evil companions, no screeching elevated trains to distress the mind; only good air, wholesome food, and healthful rest. What more could man wish for?"

Bill silently folded his letter, placed it in an envelope, stamped it, requested Terrence to hand it to the mail clerk on the flyer, and leaving Terrence in deep reflection by the flickering fire, turned into his hard bunk. "Remember, Terrence," he said, as he rolled into three dark blankets, "you're on duty till 7 A. M. Good-night."

For one long month, Terrence McRae and Billy McKay O.S.'d trains, copied train orders, cooked their own meals, washed their own dishes and clothes, practiced total abstinence and economy. What supplies they had needed had always been sent up from Valley by freight. Tourists had come and gone over the Mountain Division of the S. U. road, but none ever stopped off at Sunny Mount. With a feeling akin to envy, Terrence and Bill had gazed at the passing travelers, and looked hungrily into the bright-lighted dining cars that crawled by them in the night and caught occasional whiffs of appetizing foods from the kitchens of these same diners.

There was one thing, however, that irritated them.

The S. U. Company paid its employes but once a month—on the fifteenth. It kept back the first two weeks' pay of each employe. Terrence and Bill started to work June third, consequently on the first pay day, June fifteenth, they received nothing. It was now July third, and their first pay day was still twelve days off.

That night found the two boomers sullen and moody. Terrence had been refused a round-trip pass to Valley that very morning.

"We expect to move the office from Sunny Mount in two weeks," Ned Sullivan had told them. "Stick it out a while longer. I'll fix you out soon."

This reply was far from satisfactory to the tall night man. Of course, Ned Sullivan did not know about the seventy cents. Terrence had earned that amount the night previous by feeding a light engine crew. He wished to circulate that money at once.

At eleven P. M., the two brass pounders sat in the doorway of box car 22, puffing viciously at their pipes. Their eyes had a far-away look.

"Do you remember, Bill," said Terrence, suddenly breaking the silence, "do you remember where we were this time last year?"

"Mike's place on State street," growled Bill reminiscently. "And Terrence, I'd give this whole starved outfit to-night for just one whiff of the good old Chicago river. After all, this is a hell of a life, ain't it?"

Two dimes and two quarters jingled impatiently in Terrence's pocket. He said not a word, but walked to the telegraph key and called swiftly, "V. D."

"I. I., V. D.," answered the despatcher's office.

"I understand there's nothing on the road for three hours after No. 6 goes by," said Terrence, "and she's due here now. May I go to Grizzly Gulch on No. 6 and come back on No. 7 at three A. M.? Bill will work for me. I want to get out of this hole for a few hours."

"No," answered V. D.; "the superintendent's latest order says that no operator on the division must be given transportation over the road during his working trick. Cheer up! You'll be out of there soon."

Just then No. 6 whistled up the west track, and a moment later her locomotive stood panting in front of Sunny Mount telegraph office. After her conductor had received a "31" train order and a clearance, an excited dining-car waiter rushed into the box car with a grip.

"Dis heah grip," imparted the dusky servant, "de boss say you all is to delivah to de dining-cah conductor on No. 7."

"Just as you say," agreed Terrence, and grabbing the satchel from the darkey, recklessly flung it into a corner.

When No. 6 had pulled out and Terrence had reported that train's departure, Bill began industriously to shine his one celluloid collar.

"Terrence," he inquired, "why did we come here?"

"'Tis not," retorted his companion, rising to the dignity of his six feet and four inches of height, "'tis not, I say, why we came here, but why we stay here. Bill, I—"

Terrence stopped suddenly. His partner appeared uneasy. A peculiar odor having made itself manifest in the little box car, the two telegraphers eyed each other suspiciously, but uttered no sound.

"As I was about to say," continued Terrence, almost assured that his imagination had led him astray. "I—"

He got no farther.

Bill had already discarded his celluloid collar and was down on all fours near where Terrence had placed the grip which the waiter from No. 6 had given him. A narrow liquid stream issued from beneath it.

"Spirits," gurgled Bill, his sober countenance breaking out in one huge smile. "Smells like the real thing, Terrence."

"Truly," said Terrence, "'tis an odor not unfamiliar."

Bill quickly rose from the floor, took from the table a small sponge, then returning to the grip, soaked up a portion of the stream which issued from its bottom. He smelled the sponge, then Terrence smelled it.

"We must stop the leakage at once." declared Terrence, reaching for the grip and opening it.

A dozen pint bottles rolled out. All were labelled "BOURBON RYE WHISKEY. FIRST QUALITY," and save for one which was broken, none were empty.

"We'll borrow one bottle!" exclaimed Bill, excitedly, whereupon he snatched one, opened it, half emptied it, then handed it to Terrence. When the remaining contents had been drained, Terrence became strangely talkative and good-natured, while Bill grew morose and secretive.

"Cheer up, old block!" shouted Terrence, rising from the floor. "Methinks 'tis the dawn of liberty that approacheth. Did not our forefathers sign the Declaration of Independence on July Fourth? Was it not Patrick Henry who so valiantly declared 'Give me liberty or give me death?' We want our liberty, Bill. Box car 22 shrieks for liberty. The S. U. refuses to let us go to Valley. My boy, 'tis up to you and me to declare independence at Sunny Mount."

"How can we do what you say?" asked Bill in a voice permeated with deep gloom. "I wish we could do it. I'm sick of every blasted object in this old wreck. My own cooking gives me the jim-jams. But we can't desert the office."

"We shall not desert the office, old pal," returned Terrence, taking a fresh bottle from the grip. "We shall do nothing of the sort. We shall simply free the office. We shall travel à la café à la dining-car. Note the proximity of the main line. See yon key which unlocks the spur switch! And that grip, Bill! What hopes, joys and dreams lie sealed up in those bottles! No trains on the road for three hours! Bill, July Fourth draws nigh. Shall we lose that precious liberty for which our forefathers fought so hard?"

"Do you mean," asked Bill, suddenly brightening, "surely you don't—"

"I mean that exactly," declared Terrence, comprehending Bill's sudden enlightenment.

Terrence, a hatchet in hand, was now on the roof of the box car.

"Biff! Biff!"

The two iron wires entering there suddenly parted, but immediately bounded together again, thus keeping the circuit intact.

"Plunk, plunk, plunk, plunk!" and the four blocking ties in front of box car 22 rolled into the ditch. Both men were now in action.

"Creak, creak!" Two brakes were released.

Terrence rushed ahead and unlocked the switch leading to the main line. Then, returning to the car, he and Bill dragged one tie each to its rear and pushed with all their might on the little telegraph office.

Box car 22 moved slowly across the spur switch on to the main line. Bill jumped aboard, and Terrence, after hastily closing and locking the spur switch, rushed forward and did likewise.

The two former inhabitants of Sunny Mount, a bottle firmly clasped in each hand, sat in the doorway of box car 22 and sang in lusty voice, "Merrily we roll along, roll along," while the ancient car itself began a lively clip down the sixty miles of steep grade to Valley.

More bottles becoming empty, the two merry souls sang louder and louder, even above the dull rumble made by Sunny Mount telegraph office in its wild flight down the mountain.

Twenty minutes later, the night operator at Grizzly Gulch, a station seventeen miles east of Sunny Mount, saw through sleepy eyes a streak of red wood flash by. He had been asleep and his conscience troubled him. Rushing to the telegraph key of the despatcher's wire, he clicked hastily:

"O.S., O.S.; extra east by twelve-twenty A. M.," then signed his office call.

"What in the devil are you driving at?" snapped back the third trick despatcher at Valley. "There's not an extra on the road now. Come out of it."

The night man at Grizzly Gulch rubbed his eyes and wondered if he really were daffy.

"But, I saw," he tried to explain.

"Wake up!" interrupted the despatcher.

In what seemed but a moment later, however, Peaked Hill, a station twenty miles further east saw the same apparition.

"O.S., O.S.," clicked his sounder unsteadily; "extra east by—"

"Is this whole division going nutty?" broke in the despatcher, sharply. "Now, we've had enough of—"

Just then the telephone rang in the despatcher's office. The despatcher left his key open and answered the phone. A ranchman two miles east of Peaked Hill reported having seen a runaway train dashing down the mountain toward Valley.

While at this moment the occupants of Box car 22 were entering the realms of great joy, officials at Valley were plunged into a sea of mental anguish. Jim Riggs, the superintendent, and Ned Sullivan, chief train despatcher, had been yanked out of their beds and summoned to division headquarters.

Just where the S. U. tracks enter the long yards at Valley, a switch connects the main line with a mile stretch of upgrade track which terminates at the Molly Lee mine on the east side of Bald Mountain. On the right side of these tracks which skirt the very edge of the mountain are numerous ore dumps.

Jim Lahey, yardmaster at Valley, happened to be in his office at the west end of the Valley yards when his clerk was notified by phone of the supposed runaway train. Lahey had barely time enough to rush out of the shack and open the switch leading to the Molley Lee siding, when a red streak shot by him, plunged over the switch, shot on up the steep incline, rolled along for half its length, then jumped.

The former telegraph office at Sunny Mount went to glory down a three hundred foot ore slide, while, through some act of a kind Providence, Terrence McRae and Billy McKay, each landed in sitting posture in a bank of soft dirt not twenty feet away. When Yardmaster Lahey found them there fifteen minutes later, Bill still hugged an empty bottle, while Terrence carroled in lagging note, "O'er the d-e-e-p blue s-e-a."

Late the next day, two dusty travelers wended their way eastward over the hot roadbed of the S. U. Presently they stepped into the waiting-room of a small depot to glance at a telegraph order on its bulletin board. The order stated:

"Taking effect July fourth, the telegraph office at Sunny Mount is discontinued. Office was removed last night. The S. U. Railroad Company has decided to discontinue the use of box cars as telegraph offices."

"After all, Bill," reflected Terrence sadly, "progress is the sign of the times. But, come, let us move on towards God's country. Handling messages on the grain wires at Chicago beats leading the simple life on a mountain top all hollow."

THE EYES OF CONSCIENCE

By ROY TURNBULL

FRANKLIN CRAIG had been waiting this chance all the morning. Mr. Bettersworth, his miserly employer, wealthy owner of the fashionable Art and Curio shop, had just stepped to the warehouse some blocks distant. Yokokita, the Japanese lad of all work, stood lazily talking with the proprietor of the book store adjoining. Stealthily, the art shop clerk walked across the store, filled with treasures in pottery and metal, silk and ebony, to Bettersworth's private antique safe which stood under the cash register. He paused with hand suspended above the combination, the secret of which he had long since surreptitiously acquired. Through the cavelike entrance to the darkened store he could see the living sunshine dancing in the cobbled street.

A gusty breeze swept in, stirring up the weird mixture of smells lurking in the many objects culled from all parts of the globe. His hesitation was brief, for the contrast between the inviting sunshine, with its promise of other lands, and the monotony of the "junk" shop, as he termed it, wherein he had slaved for so long, quickly overcame his scruples.

In a moment he was down on one knee and a little later the safe door stood open before him. His eager hand readily found the thin, flat pocket of bills that his employer had drawn from the bank early that morning in order to pay for an expected cloisonne treasure from the Orient. Bettersworth's dealings, owing to the diverse methods of the many nationalities dealing with him, were always in cash. Ripping off the covering, Craig stuffed the bank notes into his coat-pocket. Hot and cold waves coursed through his pulsing veins as his hand closed over the coveted money. His traveling bag had long since been packed against this emergency. A few days of travel and the name of Franklin Craig would be but a memory.

Then slowly, but overwhelmingly, and with a spasmodic contraction of his stomach muscles, he sensed another presence in the darkened store. Instinct, with its indefinable, yet disconcerting force, apprized him of scrutinizing eyes. Turning his head with a painful jerk, he beheld a tall man in a frock coat and an old-fashioned beaver hat, standing on the other side of the low counter, watching him. Craig, the blood rushing from his face, rose slowly to his feet and shrank back involuntarily, a damning picture of guilt. The strange old man who had so silently entered the store must have witnessed the act of theft and seen him stuff the money into his pocket.

The intruder stared inscrutably at Craig, a look of world weariness and sadness on his wrinkled face. His lips moved slowly as if he were counting the inexorable moments of time, or muttering unsavory words of condemnation. Craig, with purpose and emotion inchoate, stepped forward, his gaze wildly falling on a bronze shield whereon hung an Arabian scimiter, but the old man shook his head austerely from side to side, and turning, walked slowly and softly forth from the emporium of historical trinkets into the bright sunlight.

Craig fell back against the safe, his tortured brain racing in kaleidoscopic confusion. Then summoning every ounce of will power, he rushed from the store, but the old man of the beaver hat had vanished. Yokokita, his back to Craig, still held forth idly with the proprietor of the book store.

With fear tugging at his heart, Craig struggled in the upheaval of his mind until it seemed he must collapse. As he saw the fat, dumpy figure of his employer emerge from around the corner of the block, he uttered a sharp ejaculation of terror.

The thought came with a rush—to get the money back into the safe; but no, it was too late! Yokokita had already entered the store and was busily engaged dusting a Louis XIV. chest of drawers. Turning desperately in pursuance of a rapidly forming plan, Craig quietly went to the safe and locked it with a turn of the handle. Taking a bill from the packet in his pocket he thrust it into one of Yokokita's street shoes standing in the corner, always discarded in the morning for sandals. Spying the familiar "Studies in English," which Yokokita had been perusing for weeks, Craig had a stroke of inspiration. He opened the cover of the book and inserted between the leaves a crumpled bit of paper he had fished from his pocket and on which appeared rude numerals.

Craig then hurried out into the little yard where he buried the packet of money in a far corner and, whistling merrily, busied himself with huge packing cases.

His heart beat wildly as he waited for the explosion. It came with the door flung open and Bettersworth apoplectic on the step.

"Come in here!" he cried. Craig, simulating wonderment, obeyed.

His employer pointed grimly to the antique strong box, the door now standing open.

"I put it there this morning! There isn't a chance of a mistake! Now it's gone!"

"What, sir?" inquired Craig.

"Money! Money, you idiot! Nearly five thousand dollars! Where have you been?"

This question came like a shot, but Craig was equal to the emergency.

"Unpacking the plasters, in the yard," he responded quickly. "If I had known you had forgotten to lock the safe door, I—I," he paused, visibly embarrassed, as he glanced over at the gaping Yokokita who understood but little of this wild enactment before him.

"You'd, you'd what?" demanded Bettersworth.

"Why, I wouldn't have gone out in the yard and closed the door behind me," blurted Craig, flushing and endeavoring nobly to shield Yokokita. "I thought Yokokita was in the store all the time."

Yokokita, instinctively catching something of the danger in the air, sputtered in imperfect English.

In a moment Bettersworth was at the telephone calling the police. Later, when special officers discovered the crumpled ten dollar bill in the Japanese servant's shoe, the boy from Nippon nearly fainted and when, to top it off, they investigated his pockets and clothing and finally discovered the sheet of paper between the leaves of the "Studies in English," which Bettersworth immediately recognized as the numeral notation of the combination to his safe, poor Yokokita raved incoherently while Craig solicitiously sympathized with him.

A few weeks later, in the courtroom, drowsy and humming with the murmur of voices, Craig watched the jury retire. Hope and triumph rose in his breast, for the bonds of guilt had securely fastened about the hapless Japanese boy.

The suspicion that in the regular course of investigation had included Craig now completely lifted from him.

Bettersworth, seemingly ready to burst with the suppression of his spleen, sat

next to his lawyer waiting impatiently for the verdict which, though it could not return his money, would at least prove that justice prevailed in the punishment of the thief. Yokokita, sullen and hopeless in this jargon of animosity about him, sat with eyes on the floor. Craig glanced about the courtroom and smiled condescendingly.

Yet, would the door of the jury room never open? Yokokita must be found guilty. This must close the case against further investigation.

At last the suspense was over. The judge paused in his conversation with the clerk, to read the verdict which affirmed the guilt of Yokokita. Craig, by this time a master of dissimulation, concealed his elation. After all, what did it matter if a miserable, solitary Jap like Yokokita, who had never had anything anyway, were to spend a few years in the penitentiary? Surely his own hopes, reputation and future, were of infinitely greater importance. He would resign his position in due time, dig out the hidden packet and be off for other climes. The blood began to flow more normally through his veins. Mopping his brow, he breathed with an acute sense of relief, and the next moment turned abruptly. The thing that he had feared subconsciously, had, in fact, been his obsession through all the days and nights of agony since the hour of his theft, had come to pass. The memory of that strange, mysterious, phantom-like witness, the old man with the beaver hat, had been with him every hour. There, not ten feet away, just behind the railing, sat the weird old man himself!

Craig uttered a startled cry and sank limply into the chair he had just vacated. Bettersworth turned on him.

"What is it now?" he demanded.

The guilty clerk, with protruding eyeballs, gazed into the eyes of his conscience—the fateful witness. Under the uncompromising stare of his silent accuser, Craig's spirit crumbled like sand. Two officers were already leading Yokokita toward the hold-over. The old man near the rail gathered his hat and pad of paper under his arm, preparing to rise, presumably to address the judge.

Craig's nerves gave way beneath the impending exposure, and he jumped to his feet. In a piercing hysterical voice, his words tumbling over one another, he poured forth his confession to the startled court.

Under the fearful touch of the law, Craig sank in a huddle. Dazed and motionless he heard the methodical, technical reopening of the case. The tense, full silence of the room beat in upon him like muffled hammers.

Dumbly, he was dragged toward the shining bars of the hold-over where Yokokita stood with mouth open. On the way they passed the old man of the beaver hat. He was writing on the pad of paper, supported by his flat-top hat.

"Good morning, Mr. Donaldson," offered one of the officer's at Craig's side. The old man of the beaver hat gravely bowed his head to the salutation, and Craig cringed before the austerity of his noble face.

"Brian Donaldson, the novelist," explained the officer to his companion on Craig's left. "He's blind as a bat, but he goes poking around everywhere—pawnshops, and bookstores, and police-courts. Always alone—never seems to lose his way."

Then the two officers of the court turned to their charge in dismay, for he had collapsed to unconsciousness in their rough grasp.

A soft answer may turn away wrath, but often it is given too late to block the blow that has already been started.—*Philadelphia Inquirer.*

AT TENACITY JACK'S

By MARION HILL

OME get used to it, which speaks well for the place; and some go mad, so what *they* say don't count.

Me, I've always got along first rate on the Mojave desert. It's the only spot wide enough for me to wring out my socks in without fear of sprinkling a neighbor. It irritates me to live close.

Tourists may hop in, but they're dead sure to hop out again. They go home and write the place up; call it Death Valley Desert, which it isn't. Death Valley's just around the corner, though. But tourists who wander round in *it*, never get home to write it up. They're there yet.

This is old "Muhavvy;" and bad enough. The Santa Fé trail used to cut through it; and the new Santa Fé choo-choo company has the sense to keep its tracks pretty near to the original cattle path.

You can follow the trail with your eye through three states, pretty near, if your sight's good, for there's no tree to get in the way.

This is no location for men who need trees. Once you grow used to getting along without them, they have an awful impudent look, when you do bump into them. Seem's if they had no business busting out of the sand and cutting into the sky. And they don't seem to be any manner of use; for the sun burns down through them, like they weren't there at all. If you want shade you have to blast for it, crawl in, and then not expect it around till night.

And I don't bullyrag about the sage-brush, either. It's a peaceable enough shrub, except where it covers up a rattler. It's easy on the eye, too; gray and comforting as pipe-smoke.

But I can guess where Loma Mariposa wouldn't suit a visitor.

Yes; the siding's called just so—Loma Mariposa. That's how it squares up, some, with facts.

It's nothing but a siding. The trains stop for water. That's all. There's no station; not even a plank for travelers to light on; but as they don't come, there's one plank saved, and wood's scarce.

What I was doing at the track, I don't know, and it doesn't tote up in the sum. But I was there watching the Santa Fé westbound flyer crawl on towards us. Jim Burrell was loafing with me, and Snoopy McFadden, and one or two others. The "flyers" have to kill considerable time while on the desert stretch. I've seen some engineers pull up, mid stations, and run out of their cabs to chase rabbits. That's true as you're born. And so long as the mucky-mucks at Albuquerque don't know it, where's the harm?

Well, that flyer mosied in, snaffled up all the water it wanted and slobbered off again, Frisco way.

And when it left our track clear, you could have crushed us with a grape, for there in the sand, bewildered but plucky, stood a girl, a cheap, shiny new grip, in each gloved little hand. She wasn't a skirt, mind you, but an unmistakable lady, and the cheapness of the brand new grips only bolstered up her ladiness, or whatever you call it, for they were as plain as could be bought. When a cheap

thing tries to look expensive, that's where the curse wriggles in.

Snoopy, nervous like, wheeled around and cut off somewhere.

"Me too, to go while the going's good," decided Jim Burrell and the rest.

So they meandered carelessly out of reach.

I knew what was the matter with them for I shivered with it myself. They were afraid of her. They knew, as I did, that she was here by some topsy-turvy mistake, in a place where she had no right to be; and couldn't get out till next morning's train.

And somebody had to tell her, had to send the grips tumbling out of her nerveless hands, and send the frightened pink into her face. The others didn't want to do it. They left it for me.

Why, there wasn't a woman within miles, not a solitary one. The section house had been run by a woman but she couldn't cook and they had canned her. And now a chink was cooking fine, and raising the character of the house, too.

No, not a woman in all Loma Mariposa. Of course Carmelita couldn't be reckoned with; Carmelita never stayed. She was at Flynn Kendrick's right now, and their drunk was due to be over within mighty short order: the yells were slackening constant. Then Carmelita would flit. She never hung round an empty jug. Carmelita couldn't as much as be spoken of in front of this pretty cheeked little lady with the grips, the gloves, and the veil tied trim over her small nose. I hadn't ever seen a veil in Loma Mariposa before.

But, shucks, it was just cowardice to stave things off by pretending to ruminate, sort of, on a veil.

I walked across the track and took off my hat. It 'most stuck to my forehead—hadn't doffed it in a coon's age and had lost the hang.

"Good morning, miss," I said. Which it wasn't. It was afternoon, late. Her bright face made me slip up.

"Good afternoon," she answered, quick and clear and heartbustingly cheerful. She looked around at the shacks, puzzled-like. "This *is* Loma Mariposa, isn't it?"

No use me denying anything so easy proved. When I start in to deny, I pick on something safe.

"Oh, yes," I said, following her eye around and seeing things all worse than I'd ever seen them before. "Lucky it doesn't know it's Loma Mariposa, but it is."

"I thought the name meant 'place of butterflies,' so I made up my mind there were butterflies, and of course flowers."

But she didn't grow grouchy because nothing was as nice as she had hoped. She was the kind to cheer up on mosquitoes if butterflies failed, and trim a house pretty with sawdust when roses petered out. In my mind I bet on her, then and there, that though she would think a man an angel before she married him, she wouldn't go back on him when he proved just man, but would make him happy, and be happy herself; likely would be gladder than ever thinking that he, wingless, couldn't possibly moult in the house. Queer, but this girl made you think of marrying right away.

"It's the mountain that's the butterfly," I said.

"Mountain?" she echoed, smiling.

Yes, it was pretty flat; but 'way up against the horizon were the hills of the Topaz Range; and two of them grew together with a join in the middle. The Topaz Range is strong on color; and when the lights were just right that double mountain looked like a giant butterfly.

I showed it to her.

"Yes, I see," she agreed finally. "Uncle never told me it was the mountain."

Uncle? Now who was uncle? She let it in on me like hot lead.

"He never really encouraged me to come," she explained. "Though he said it would be nice to have me—that he

missed my johnnybread and popovers and elderberry pies."

Gee, I hadn't heard of elderberry pies since I left Pennsylvania, and my mouth watered. But she'd have to make elderberry pies out of stewed garnets, this side of the world.

"And when I lost my school," she continued, saddening a bit, "I hadn't a soul to turn to but Uncle Flynn. So I put all my money into a ticket here, and here I am—to surprise him. Do you know Uncle Flynn? I'm Nelly Kendrick. He's Flynn Kendrick."

Know Flynn Kendrick? Why, Great Glittering Orion, didn't I hear him that very minute?

Also Carmelita.

"Miss," I said firmly, "your uncle ain't here."

"Not here?" she asked, paling a mite, but game. "Truly?"

"Truly," I said, firmer yet. He was out of his head; if that isn't "not here" I'd like to know what is.

"When'll he be back?" she asked faintly.

"Miss, I don't know." Nor I didn't.

She didn't *drop* her grips, but she lowered them carefully to the scorching sand and let them burrow there while she thought out the situation.

"But he'll be back sometime?" she finally asked.

That's where I answered like a fool, coming out with the literal truth.

"Oh, yes!" I said. I chipped it off spry as an idiot.

"Then that's all right," she said, bracing up again, and lifting her grips. "For I can stay at his house. I won't be afraid by myself. Will you please take me there?"

"On the jump," I promised, never stirring a leg. I thought like mad. Was there any shack empty? Then I remembered Tenacity Jack's. He'd left that morning for Aqua Caliente to referee a prize fight—a three day tournament.

"Come on, miss," I said, letting out ten breaths in one. I politely persuaded my two hands into the grip handles where hers already were, and at the brief touch she let go same as if I'd burned her. And she blushed a little; but thanked me lovely. She wasn't touchy; but she couldn't be touched. My soul flopped down on its knees before her.

She talked very prettily as we toddled along, and kept up her spirits bravely, considering the impression the "houses" were making on her.

They weren't more than corncribs. You'd apologize to a prize hog for covering him with one. You see, wood's mighty precious. We can't ever build a new house till an old one blows down and gives us the material.

This girl never croaked a croak. But I could see she was wondering how a woman could possibly live in such tumble-down-dicks of huts; for her next shy question was:

"May I ask if you are married?"

"Yes, I am," I said dismally. I hadn't remembered it for centuries. My wife had forgotten it longer ago still; so what was the use my remembering?

"Oh, will you ask her to come to see me?" implored Nelly Kendrick.

"Miss," I said, keeping my eye steady on the great stone butterfly, "we men who are here wouldn't *be* here if we had a good wife somewhere. I don't know where mine is."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she said gently.

Now that twisted my throat into a knot and burned a fear of tears into my dry eyes. You see, nobody had been sorry for me for so many years that I'd forgotten how soft it could sound.

"There isn't a woman in all Loma Mariposa," I said, owning the truth sooner instead of later.

The blow 'most knocked her out, as I knew it must. But she stayed plucky. She took her own medicine with grit.

"I've done a foolish, foolhardy thing," she acknowledged, pressing her velvety

young lips tight. When she mastered their trembling, she spoke again, sort of explaining. "But I had nowhere else to go. All my life I've never had a home, but have taught school in the winter and boarded in the district all summer. That has used up my savings."

"Miss," I said, glad of a chance to cut short her trouble, "here we are at Ten—This is the house."

"Suppose uncle's got the key with him!" she worried.

Also she looked around her, kind of desperate for the moment, to see if all the shacks sized up no better. And they didn't. Each one was like the rest. This one of Tenacity Jack's was a bit cleaner, to tell the truth, but so little you couldn't see it. Ten or twelve of them made up the whole town. And of course there weren't fences between, or anything like that. You picked out your own house mostly by the color of the wash that flopped from the clothes line.

Squinting around, I recognized, far off, my own red underwear; next to it, Burrell's blue jeans; this way, Snoopy's reckless output of five striped socks—Snoopy always hung out uneven socks in fives, sevens or nines, but he had only two feet like the rest of us; Tenacity had a full line of red-and-white spotted wipes and one dish towel; over yonder there flapped Flynn Kendrick's display of one yellow sock and one black one, curled up as in life, not washed at all, but only hung out, jovial-like, same as flags. And the houses didn't stand up happy, but toppled some, the wind was so strong.

"Key?" I said, remembering to speak. "Oh, I have the key." And I hove up my foot and kicked the door open. What use would a key be? You could gouge your way into any of the houses with a sore thumb. "Come right in, Miss Nelly, and make yourself at home."

She did it, too. But the heat rushed out of that shut-up house worse than a furnace, and a smell of stale food like from a camp fire's ashes into which a bone has dropped. So I hoisted the windows and propped them open with bottles, making it look more natural and comfortable.

Nelly Kendrick slowly took off her hat and coat and fixings, and put them down on the cot bed. For we were in the parlor. The only other room was the kitchen.

I wandered in there and propped up those windows, too. She came close after me, as though for companionship. I just hated for her to see the bare messiness of the place. But queer enough, it cheered her.

"Well, there's a need for me here," she chirped. "I see that!"

I wondered how Tenacity Jack would stand for the remark, but of course he couldn't say anything.

"There's no real reason for this being the hole it is," she went on. "Tear those rags from the windows, put up sash curtains, polish that stove, cover the table with a clean cloth, scrub this filthy floor, and this room's as sweet as could be." She got enthusiastic. "I brought along a little cross-bar muslin for a dress, but I'm going to cut it up for curtains before I cook a bite. Though goodness knows I'm hungry."

Well, if she was going to tear down Tenacity's cherished rags, that was up to him to fuss, not me. As for food—

"Help yourself," I said, pointing out his cache.

She stepped curiously to the wall to look at a medal pinned there. It was a bronze star. On it was:

John St. John
One mile dash

St. John was Tenacity Jack's hind name.

Nelly Kendrick turned "uncle's" medal over without removing it from the wall, saw nothing explanatory on the back, and let it drop to place again, naturally not understanding.

Then I realized that the place was plumb hung with oddities, none of them like Flynn, and that she might undertake to question me about them. So I took my leave.

"Miss Nelly," I said, hopping out of the back door, sudden like, "don't think I've deserted you, for I haven't. But you need some time to yourself, and you'll want to rest and eat. I'll come back later on in the evening and see how you fare and chat it over with you. I'll even bring my blanket and sleep outside the door if you feel nervous, though you're as safe here as in jail."

"And much free-er," she said, laughing. "Thank you. But I'm not afraid. Don't worry about me. I'm all right at last. Good-bye for a while."

I walked off to find Burrell and swear it out with him. Poor girl. "All right at last!" So far as I could see there wasn't any "right" for her at either end of the line, for she couldn't stay where she was, and was as bad off where she came from.

I couldn't find Burrell. He's the kind that's always underfoot when you don't want him, and hiding out when you do. So I sort of slid into the section house on chances. The boys were playing auction rummy. That settled it. I sat down and took a hand and forgot Nelly Kendrick same as if she'd never lived.

Auction rummy is the best yet. It's a card game that takes not only science and luck but pluck as well. There's mighty few games of cards that call for pluck. But auction rummy does; and it fascinates me. The pluck comes in having the nerve to break up a good certainty in your hand for a chance that's better. Me, I can sit at auction rummy from seven to twelve and from twelve to the next seven.

So I can't say exactly how long it was or how short, but the lights were lit when I came to during a shuffle and heard the Mexican say, glancing out of the door:

"Somebody, he jump offa de handcar."

"Who that?" asked the chink.

The Mexican obligingly peered through the dusk at the man who had tumbled off.

"That Tenacity Jack," he remarked.

"*Good* night!" I said, and raised right up, throwing down the hand dealt me without looking at it—which shows my state of mind.

"Bit?" asked the Mexican, startled. A rattler was all he was ever afraid of; and he knew of nothing else that would move me from rummy.

"No. I left something valuable at Tenacity Jack's and I'll have to get it."

So I ran, and lively too.

Jack had a head start, but I kept a close second. He would have heard me if he hadn't been whistling his lungs loose. And it was too dusky for him to notice me sprinting behind.

We both struck the shack at about the same time, but he, still ignorant of me, clipped round to the kitchen door, being doubtless keen for grub. I started up the front step, for there was Nelly Kendrick in the parlor just trying to light a lamp. Her back was to me, so *she* didn't see me either. She got the lamp to burn. I noticed how extra pretty she looked by lamplight. She was slighter, also, than I had thought.

Tenacity Jack hit the kitchen with a thud.

She was startled but sang out happily, "That you, uncle?"

"Now, nix on that, nix on that, Dentalia Pearls; and *clear out,*" sang Jack back.

I had to sit down on the step to laugh quiet in my own stomach. I can't tell you how funny "Dentalia Pearls" really was. And the explanation is so long as to cook all the cool, quick wit out of it. Loma Mariposa boasts just one rock, the rest being sand, and on that rock some agile guy from God knows where, had pasted a picture "ad" of a tooth paste. The "ad" was the head of a gay sort of girl showing all her teeth, and under-

neath were the words, "Dentalia Pearls."

We made b'lieve, lots, that the girl was our particular friend. And as most of the drunks leaned against that rock for real comfortable slumber, "going to see Dentalia Pearls" grew into another word for any frisky kind of pipe-dream.

Nelly Kendrick ducked her sleek head to listen.

"What did you say?" she demanded, and carried the lighted lamp into the kitchen.

I limbered out restfully to watch what went on, for I was in the dark, in the privatest sort of a private box to see the show, and they were in the light.

And that handsome kitchen hopped suddenly up and hit me dumb, for she'd done every last thing she said she'd do, and the result was some wonder.

She put the lamp on the renovated table, and eyed Jack hard.

"You tell me what you are doing here," she ordered finally.

"Well, I like that," he ripped out. But he took his hat off. "Isn't the explanation up to you first?"

"I'm where I belong," she said proudly. "And that's more than you can say."

Then he caught sight of the ruffly sash-curtains and the other ga-dinks, and started to agree with her. But he's level headed, is Jack, and he poked his head out of the back door and looked into the night. I knew what for. He was hunting his wash. It was all there—five spotted wipes, one dish towel. The outfit checked up to a dot. So he knew he was home. Naturally he came in, threw his hat on the floor and sat down.

She looked at him very hard again and then began to soften. No woman could take a good look at Tenacity Jack and not soften, I reckon. For he was all-round the lovablest boy I ever knew. A strapping big hulks, he was, but friendlier than a Newfoundland pup. Come day, go day, there was always the hint of a smile somewhere on his face, either in his honest gray eyes, or on his lips, or, blame me, even in his chin, which had a sunny kind of cleft in it big enough for you to lay your finger in. And square! That boy couldn't even spell crooked. The cleanest sport he was who ever went through college. That's why all the toughs wanted him for an umpire. They could trust him.

College? Yes, sir. Jack knew his A, B, C's. What he came out here for was to wrestle down some lung flunk or other. And he did it. Why, the hang-on grit of him can't be told. Once let him set his head on something and he never gave up, just never. And talking of head, his hair was great, blacker than a crow, and so shinily parted that it looked as if he'd just come up from swimming. Me, if I'd been a girl, and he'd wagged even his little finger at me, I'd come a-running. Nor ever be sorry for it, that's the chief point.

This girl, though, wasn't the kind to come for only one wag, I could see that. But she terribly wanted to find some real good reason for letting him stay there; I could see that, too.

"Maybe you're a friend of Mr. Kendrick," she suggested at last.

"Well, not much!" denied Jack heartily. "I'm no friend of his."

Mostly forgetful like, he slid his hungry hand across the cloth to one of his own crackers; then slid it empty back.

"You want some food?" she asked sympathetically.

"Starved," he owned up.

"I'm starved myself," she said shortly. "So I know how you feel."

The hospitable side of her chucked a second plate and cup on the table 'fore she knew what she was doing.

"Will you stay and have something to eat?" she invited.

Stay? What had he come for but to stay? He looked dazed at his own board, his own dishes, his own eats; and all but split.

"Thank you; maybe I will," he said drily.

She went to the wood-box beside the stove and tugged at one of the manzanita roots with which to freshen up the fire. It's mighty pretty fuel, manzanita is, smooth and red as beats; but it's kinky, and one root hugs another; so she had several tugs coming.

"Allow me," cried Jack, hopping up to the job.

They sure made a nice picture, she lifting the lid from the glowing fire, he packing manzanita in artistically. And each wondering what the hades the other was doing there, but too full of manners to press the asking. It was nuts for me all right, but I'd been glad to have some of the fire, too. For when the day's heat goes, it goes a-kiting. A drop in temperature of thirty degrees at a clip is nothing at all for dear little Loma Mariposa. But I hated to butt in just then.

They had a skittish, uneasy, but tickled-to-death-honeymoon halo atop of them both as they sat opposite at the table and passed each other the plates. Jack opened his eyes a bit when she knifed into his pet box of sardines—he'd denied me those sardines only a week ago—but he took what she gave him and was thankful.

"You see, I've been fasting since five o'clock this morning," he explained sociably. "I started off for Aqua Caliente to see a prize fight through, but, a few miles out, I learned that the two men had had a private quarrel on the street and had killed each other. So I came back. The fight was off."

"Oh, isn't that dreadful!" she cried.

"Yes, dreadful—no fight."

As they chatted away, off and on, I noticed the change that came to them. Both the kind that talked straight from the shoulder, they soon showed a little halt and stammer. Each grew alively conscious of the other and suffered something delightful.

Mooning out there on my lonesome step, I philosophied a heap. I don't know what about; I never do know, when I philosophy; but it left me with a cold, empty pain at my heart—for myself.

When I looked into the bright kitchen again, Tenacity Jack had come to the end of his reticence, no longer being hungry. He laid down his knife and fork, elbowed his plate aside, folded his arms on the table, and leaned ingratiatingly forward on them, his eyes very soft and dazzling.

"Do you mind telling me who you are?" he asked.

I sighed and pulled my belt in a notch; for peace was over.

"Certainly not," she answered, surprised that he hadn't guessed, account of her being where she was. "I'm Nelly Kendrick."

"Anything of Flynn's?" he asked, pained.

"His niece. I came to keep house for him."

He got the situation in a flash—as she hadn't, yet.

"Oh, I see," he said pityingly. "You found him dead drunk—and worse—sized it up for helpless, as it is, and came here to my place, it being empty. Quite right. But—!" In his mind, he pieced the tale out further and blushed. "What a cad you must think me for intruding! My word on it, Miss Kendrick, I didn't know!"

It was too much for her to grasp in the lump; she had to pick it up grain by grain.

"Uncle Flynn 'drunk—and worse'? I 'found' him? Why, he's not here!"

"Begging your pardon, he is. I thought you knew it."

"But he *isn't* here!" gazing from room to room.

"Not in *my* house; of course not."

"Yours? He said it was his!"

"Kendrick said?"

"No."

"Who?"

"A man."

"What name?"

"I don't know."

"What like?"

"It's hard to say. Here, all of you dress the same. But he was kind and very gentlemanly; had a low, soft voice; quietly wistful eyes, blue; and seemed sensitive."

God bless her.

But Tenacity slowly shook his head, not recognizing this for me.

"With wonderfully, well—bright hair," she added.

"Sunrise! Sunrise told you this was Kendrick's?"

Then that phase of the situation took hold of her and sent the blood flying into her face, and out of it.

She shoved back her chair and stood up, in a tremble. Her eyes sought the escape of the open door, and she glanced out into the night, but was afraid of it, and no wonder. For it was just hopeless miles of black desert, not even star-lit, with a desperate wind cutting gashes across it.

"What am I to do? Oh, what am I to do?" she whispered. "What have I *done?* And what is going to happen to me?"

Quite aghast at this collapse of the little creature whom he had taken to be coolly practical and able to look out for herself, he studied a bit further, and then grabbed the whole truth—that she was defenceless, homeless, terrified; the kind that needs a man, like a child, and always *will* need a man.

"Do?" he cried, jumping up himself, and holding out his hand to her—a hand brown enough on the back, but white within, and strongly, warmly loyally red-veined. "Why, let me love you, and marry you, and kick the world around for you!"

"How dare you!" she said.

But it was only convention that spoke; her timid eyes held little of anger; and at last she shyly reached for his steady hand. But only as a grateful shake.

"Thank you," she said, half sobbing. Then she dropped his fingers. "It was awfully kind of you. But I see I forced it from you. I didn't mean to."

"Then you will?" he sang.

"NO!" she blazed, drawing back again, but if ever the dawn of love glinted in a girl's furious eyes, it was in her's then.

Tenacity Jack let go for a "no"? Not he.

He bunted the chairs out of his way with his foot, for he felt the need of space, and then he expanded. He talked such a blue streak I can't put down a tenth of it. It would sure have coaxed the cud from a camel. I never heard such zip and go in the way of love-making before or since.

"Yes, you forced it from me, you forced it from me, Nelly Kendrick, for I couldn't help myself! Do you think it takes a century to fall in love? How long does 'falling' take? A second! In my heart, I gave myself to you the minute I heard your voice from the other room. I'd been hunting for the sweetness of it all my life. Can't you see that this last half hour has been fairyland for me? I'd woo you for years and wait for you through eternity if need be; but here is a place where the need is for swiftness, not delay. Give yourself to me without fear, for as God hears me I love you honestly and dearly. Why do you shrink away from me? You have been very sweet and gentle to me till now. So you cannot hate me. You said you had nowhere to go—"

"And I haven't," she sobbed between her shut teeth.

But I heaved a tremendous sigh out there by my lonely, for I knew by the sound of her voice that he'd met a "tenacity" equal to his own, and that she'd never let herself be thrown into his arms by force of her own need, let her like him never so well. What to do with her till train time to-morrow was still the problem of the hour.

"Then let my home be yours," warbled on Jack, nighting-galing to beat the band. Lord, how his voice sang! Every word touched softer than a kiss. I don't see how she held out against him. "We are

both waifs of the world, pilgrims in the West, hunting for life and happiness. Let us give it to each other. I am poor only for want of love. In everything else I am well off and able to care for you as you require. Either we can live here, and make this desert blossom like a garden, or we can go back to the East that we came from. Nelly! Girl! Give yourself!"

"Don't touch me, don't touch me!" she cried, sobbing sure from fright now, and pressed, piteous-like, against the bare wood wall.

Well, I couldn't have her tortured, so I mosied in.

"Good evening," I said, soft and society. Then I introduced them.

"Miss, Tenacity Jack. The rest is on that medal."

He dropped his outstretched arms to his side and drew up like a trooper. And she took her hands from her eyes. At first she had started to run towards me, for protection; but when she saw who it was, she hauled off.

"Why did you tell me a lie?" she flung.

I really winced. For I'm the truthfullest man ever. My guardian angel could loaf on the job year in year out, and find me sweet as a nut when school started again.

"Because it was cleaner than the truth," I admitted. Then I hedged. "But I didn't lie."

"You did. You said my Uncle Flynn was gone."

"He is," I said seriously. "There's nothing but the beast left. If you went to him now he could put an axe in you and never know it."

"Oh, poor Uncle Flynn!" she moaned, putting her gentle hands over her eyes again.

"*Poor* Uncle Flynn?" I chuckled out one snort. Couldn't help it.

"Why did you say this was his house?" She ripped back to the lies again.

"Miss, I didn't *say* it. I only *walked* it."

"Oh, I know you tried to do for the best," she sighed wearily. She was plumb tired out. She needed sleep and plenty of it. She came close up to me, and very afraid, put her two hands lightly on the handle of my gun in my belt, never daring to draw it, but looking at it yearningly. "If I were a man I could shoot myself and end it."

Queer, how they have to have a house where they feel they belong. I couldn't do a thing for her. My brains were racked to a frazzle. Tenacity Jack, he was rags.

Then there was a little sort of hubbub outside and some one walked lightly through the parlor.

I found out afterwards that Snoopy hadn't gone far enough from the station but what he could listen, and bit by bit he'd spread the tale.

I turned to look at the light walker.

It was Carmelita.

She was sober and pale; and the lamplight did for her what it had done for little Nelly, brought out the best. Her blue silk dress didn't show its stains, nor her bead necklace the gaps. She was part dago, but not so you could notice it, except for her black hair and coldly snapping eyes.

"You two men can jump the stockade," she said briefly. "I'll take care of this girl, and good care, if she'll let me, till she finds out what she wants to do."

"Oh, please!" cried Nelly Kendrick, letting go my pistols. She ran to Carmelita and gratefully slipped her hand in hers. Then she remembered some more of those truthful lies, and questioned me again. "Why did you tell me there was no woman here but myself?"

Carmelita looked at me, a flash of fire, but sad.

I dropped my eyes before hers. *Mine* —before Carmelita's. Fancy it.

"Vamos! Quit the claim. Light out," suggested Carmelita to us both. "I'll stay here to-night; mothering 's a new trade to me, but I'll find out how."

Little Nelly, looking mighty wisp-like compared with the fullness of the woman whose hand she still gratefully hung to, motioned also to us to go.

"Girl!" cried Tenacity, "don't send me away without a word! What have I done except beg you to be my wife?"

"God!" said Carmelita to her charge. "If a good man offers you his love, his name, take it, you fool, and be everlastingly on your knees to him."

She shook the girl's hand from hers and sat down at the table, shivering. Then she dropped her head in her arms.

The girl shivered, too, and stared at her silently, guessing some, but knowing nothing except that the man wasn't so bad a refuge after all. Her fear of him changed to fear of the shaking woman. She walked timorously to him, touched him softly, then gave herself to him forever in a swift, clinging embrace.

But she broke right away, her face all heaven.

"Good night," she said. "Good night —Jack. I'll stay here with her. She needs me." She went back to the table and put her arms around Carmelita's shoulders, but her face smiled at Jack. "Come in the morning."

On our way to the section house, Tenacity gamboled loads.

"Isn't life all right?" he asked, slapping me.

"Sure!" I said. But my heart added, "To some."

For there was Flynn, and Carmelita, and me.

THE GIRL GOD MADE FOR JONES

By MARY CAROLYN DAVIES

YOU probably won't believe this story. When we tie a wet towel around our brains, and think up, and puzzle out, and elaborate intricate mechanical plots for you, you say, "How realistic!" But when we simply sharpen our pencils and take down the stories that Nature makes up for you, you say they're not true to life.

So, as I said, you probably won't believe this story. I wouldn't have believed it myself if I were to hear it now. And Jones certainly wouldn't have, if it had not happened to him.

The first thing Jones did when the train was wrecked was to swear. He swore in Tegala. He always said it was more satisfying than swearing in English, because, although the Tegalic words were not essentially wicked in themselves, they were so very connotative. I believed Jones when he told me this, for he had just upset an ink bottle over his tennis flannels. And the little oration Jones made was strongly connotative, to say the least.

He swore not so much because the train had calmly walked off the trestle, as because the place it had chosen to walk off in seemed to be a river of some kind, and the water was rising in the car which penned them with a rapidity which, to say the least, was disconcerting.

Presently it occurred to Jones to wonder if he were the Robinson Crusoe of the bunch—there had not been many people on the train, anyway—so he shouted, "Is anybody there?"

"I—I—think so," came a voice out of the darkness, close at his elbow.

It was a very frightened voice, and it evidently belonged to a girl. Now, according to all the rules of romance and sudden meetings and love-at-first-sight etiquette, the voice should have been what George Eliot, William Shakespeare, or somebody, calls "soft, gentle and low, an excellent thing in a woman." But this voice, though very feminine, sounded as if it could call out, "Thirty Love," or even a few golf terms on occasion. But to Jones it was an "excellent thing" and all the rest of the quotation, just then.

"Where are you?" he shouted then, and the Voice laughed a little. The laugh had little trembly places in it, as if it hadn't quite decided whether to be a laugh or a sob.

"I—don't—know," she said truthfully. Neither did Jones.

They knew only that they found themselves penned down, with the water coming up swiftly, and they knew that when the water got a little higher they would be drowned like blind kittens in a sack. The bitter part of it was that there was absolutely nothing they could do. Help was too far away to come in time.

The girl was a plucky little thing, and Jones stuck to keeping up a conversation, with the courage of the Titanic orchestra.

"Do you mind dying?" he asked once, quite as if he were asking her if she cared for olives, or took sugar in her tea.

"Well, it isn't that I mind dying, so much," she answered frankly, "but I don't like being dead. Do you?"

Jones did not. And he said so. Not

so emphatically and vividly as he would have liked to say it, of course.

"You know," she said abruptly, with an apologetic little laugh, "at high school we used to have a debating society, and the president would call upon us for impromptus. I didn't mind preparing a speech—at least not much"—she qualified conscientiously—"but I always did think impromptus were taking a mean advantage. Death's like that, isn't it? Some people have time to die grandly, while some of us are just—called on impromptu."

Presently she wondered dreamily what Heaven would be like. Jones wanted to say it seemed very like Heaven to him there with her, but as he had not been properly introduced to her yet, he felt that it would not be quite the thing to do.

He had a vague idea that it was the proper thing to say on such occasions, so he asked timidly, "Are you ready to die?"

"Oh, no!" she answered quickly. "I haven't seen Europe yet, and I was just learning to skate backwards. I can't cross my feet at the corners yet, but—" She stopped, and her sigh was half-whimsical, half-regretful.

"It's a shame," he sympathized, "that this didn't happen a week or so later. These companies really make no effort to accommodate their passengers."

She dimpled. He could not see her, of course. But you can always tell by the sound of a girl's laugh if she has dimples.

"Was there anything you wanted to do first?" she asked, not that she cared, but just to say the proper thing.

He laughed shortly. "Everything," he answered briefly.

After a silence that lasted quite a minute, she remarked: "I suppose you don't care to elucidate?"

"You see," he explained, "I was just on my way home from the Service—a lonely post in the Philippines. Just two white men of us—Barrett and I. Four years of it." He was far away now, three thousand miles and several months away. The girl was silent. He went on presently: "And every night of those four years I dreamed of coming home, and seeing American girls again. There wasn't any particular girl, you understand. There never was. It was only that we were hungry to see white women again. Why, do you know what Barrett and I used to dream of, as we smoked and watched the water every minute? You can stand it through the day, when you've your work to do, and must keep your head and your pulses steady. But the evenings and the nights—my God, the nights—"

The girl did not interrupt him, and presently he went on, in a lighter tone. "We used to say what we wished most. Of course, it sounds childish to you—it would to anyone in his senses—but we were starved for companionship, for beauty. We wished for a big dance hall for just ourselves, with as many partners as we wanted."

The girl in the dark was affected by this; she didn't know whether it shocked her or not, but it counted, coming from him; for he was the last man in the world to care about girls, ordinarily. She knew. She could tell by his voice just what kind of man he was. There are not so many types of men as of girls, you know.

"And now, just as I'm within a few hours of home—" he tried to laugh lightly, and almost suceeded.

"I'll never get to talk with those girls now," he regretted, after a moment.

"There'll be the angels," she sympathized instantly. "They may not be very good company, but they are very beautiful." She spoke with the grave conviction of one upon intimate terms with the angels.

The water was creeping up very close now, and they both knew that it was only a question of seconds.

"We might as well say good-by now," the girl said. There was a pathetic little

question mark in her voice, and Jones responded to it.

"Yes," he said, "there's no hope. I'll keep your head up out of the water as long as I can, but there's only a minute or two left, at the best. Well, we're not afraid." Then, "Since we're both certain to die in the next ten minutes," he said, and stopped. She waited. The black water crept higher exultantly.

"I—never kissed a girl in my life," said Jones simply, "and—I'd like, just once before I die, to see how it would feel. May I kiss you good-by?"

The world was perfectly still for as much as a second. Then, out of the dark, a very little voice said, "Since we're dying, it can't be very wrong, can it?"

Somehow, in the blackness, his lips found hers. I can't tell you how Jones felt, because he says it couldn't be described. And Jones ought to know. And I can't tell you how the girl felt. But I will tell you this, that she had been born and brought up in New England. So perhaps you can guess.

The next thing Jones saw was the kalsomined, dead-white wall of a hospital ward.

Now, all his life Jones had had a great scorn for the weakness of those people who said, "Where am I?" when they stopped fainting. In fact, he held it truth that no one in real life ever did say such a thing.

"It's all a silly fancy of these bally novelists," he would remark. "You can't see a play or read a novel without someone insanely opening his eyes and saying, 'Where am I?' As if it mattered in the least where he was. It's simply sickening."

Jones had spent much brain power thinking up suitable and rational opening remarks to make if he should ever have a fainting fit or be hit on the head. He actually, I believe, craved an accident, so he could have a chance to spring upon the unsuspecting populace a perfectly logical sentence when he came to.

And now, as he opened his bruised eyes, with the doctor and nurse watching him eagerly, he—Jones, the logical, Jones the practical, Jones, who sat in the reserved seats of the scorners—said weakly, "Where am I?" He was furious with himself. Then he began to swear, in Tegala, of course, but his tone so affected the trained nurse that she always looked upon Jones with an eye of mistrust after that.

Jones swore till his wasted strength gave out. Afterward an awful possibility occurred to me. "Jones," I said, "what if you really had died, and had waked up in Heaven, and then begun by swearing a blue streak like that?"

Jones looked frightened for a second. Then he cheered up. "But," he said, confidentially, "I knew right away it wasn't Heaven, because I saw Doctor Jeremy there." And I couldn't find any fault with Jones's reasoning, either. I am acquainted with Doctor Jeremy myself.

But the girl—what of her? Jones thought of her the first second of his recovery—and every succeeding second for some months.

The doctor told him she was dead. It must have been the one, anyway. In the mix-up it was hard to find out much. All the other victims but Jones had gone on, and the girl was dead. At least, a girl was, and even Jones had to accept the evidence that it was the girl.

I think he could have forgotten the voice, but a kiss is the very mischief to get into a man's system, especially when one has never seen, and doesn't even know the name of, the girl he has kissed.

They hadn't even thought to ask each other's names. I spoke about it to Jones once. "What could have been the use," he objected, "when we would never see each other alive? And if we met after death, names wouldn't matter."

Jones's sole object in life now was to find the girl. And he had no clue in the world except that her lips were like roses,

and her voice like—but what's the use repeating it? You have heard men rave before. Jones wasn't even original. He plagiarized all the poets, from Omar down.

Every girl he met was but a potential girl of the wreck. He was the prince with the glass slipper, trying it on each girl, to see if she were Cinderella. Only the prince had it all over Jones, for Jones couldn't very well ask every girl to whom he was introduced, "Pardon me, but haven't we kissed before?"

He used to listen eagerly to their voices, but he had almost given up, when he met Miss Merrill. They were having a two-step together. It was a very rollicking two-step. As they began to dance, she spoke, and Jones started. The Voice! But he knew he could tell better if it were in the dark; so, as he listened, he shut his eyes for an instant. Did you ever shut your eyes while doing a two-step, with a stout partner in a crowded room? You don't think it would be dangerous? Neither did Jones.

When they had disentangled the victims, Jones's partner spoke to him about the incident. And Jones was convinced that her voice was not *the* Voice. He wearied somewhat in the quest, and he said he had forgotten just what her voice sounded like, anyway.

Then, he had a suspicion that Miss Garland was the girl, and finally resolved to find out. He didn't quite know how to go about it.

"Miss Garland," he stammered, "were you—did you"— then, in desperation,— "have you ever been kissed?"

"Oh, Mr. Jones," she said, "how dare you?" and held up her pretty lips coquettishly.

Jones escaped somehow, and it was then that he adopted the doctor's theory that the girl was dead.

Jones used to sit and dream of the Voice over his pipe. This was all very well, until finally he fell in love with a very real girl. Her name was Miss Armistead. Miss Armistead was not especially beautiful, she was not especially brilliant, she was not especially anything, except, the girl God made for Jones. I know, because Jones told me so.

Jones adored her, and she him. It was ideal in every way. Only, and here is where the trouble comes in, there was that diabolical kiss. Jones didn't dream of the Voice any more, but how could he ever tell the Real Girl about that kiss? She might not understand. The girl you are engaged to, so often does not understand such things, you know.

Of course, he would not tell her if he could help it, but this is what buffaloed Jones. The men at the club had told him that a girl always says, "Am I the first girl you ever kissed?" So if the real girl asked him that, what was Jones to do? He would not lie to the girl.

So, though they were engaged, Jones had never asked for a kiss. Miss Armistead sometimes wondered at it a little. She was only human.

She spoke of it to her most intimate girl friend one night, after a dance, when they were doing up their hair. The girl friend had met Jones. "Perhaps," she hazarded, "perhaps he doesn't know how."

It had to happen sometime, of course. One evening, when there was a moon, Jones lost his head and kissed her. She was very still for a second. Jones almost dared to hope. Then, "Phil, dear," said Miss Armistead, "am I the first girl you ever kissed?" She couldn't help it. Girls are like that.

"Well, you see," began poor Jones, but she cut him short.

"Yes, or no, Phil," she insisted.

"No," he said; but wait, dear, let me explain—" But Miss Armistead had heard enough. His little romance was over.

But the last drop in his humiliation was to come. It was at once of those idiotic Amusement Parks; both were in the same party, and they were all getting

into one of the boats in the Old Mill. The boat was too small, and someone, unconscious of the quarrel, called out gaily, "You two will have to take the next boat!"

There was no help for it. A haughty and furious young lady stepped in, followed by a furious and haughty young man.

The machinery started, and they had got well into the black cavern, when there was a sudden jar, and the boat stopped. Outside, they were trying to start the thing, while within all was black and silent.

After a long while, the girl said, with a half-sob, "Phil, was she pretty?"

"Who?" cried out Jones, almost upsetting the boat.

"The other girl," sobbed she; and of course the only thing Phil could do was to persuade her that there never had been any other girl, and never would be. He told her the whole story, with the kiss as the climax.

"I asked her," his laugh was reminiscent, "if she were ready to die, and she said—"

"She said," Miss Armistead took up his sentence, "that she hadn't seen Europe yet, and she was learning to skate backwards."

Well, that's all. But sometimes I wonder what would have happened if the girl in the dark had not turned out to be Miss Armistead. Jones wakes up in the night sometimes, and wonders about it, too.

The only female charms now hid, are those beneath a drooping lid.

It is not so much the college-bred man as the collar-brand man that makes a hit these days.

Clothes make the man—swear at the price.

Scant sympathy is felt for the St. Louis man who found two weeks in the business world, after a college career, so sordid that he tried to end his life. The same day came news of the purchase of the old Chicago *Herald* building by A. M. Andrews, who used to sell newspapers in front of it and was given up to die at 16 of tuberculosis.

—*New York Telegraph.*

THE VASE OF THE MIKADO

By A. ERNEST B. LANE

KRYTE JUSTICAN was a collector — a professional collector. He reaped his harvest from remote fields, sown with the flotsam and jetsam of bygone ages.

Often he was sent on very particular missions by enthusiastic amateurs or richly endowed scientific societies to oozy islands below the equator, sweating disease, to the great poppy fields of China, to the Fiji Islands. Orchids, primitive opium pipes, aboriginal weapons and cannibalistic curios — these were his quest, and there was no dangerous or remote region into which he had not penetrated, no peril which he had not braved, and escaped.

But as yet he had not made the big "find" which is the dream of all collectors. To be the discoverer of something absolutely unique and inimitable means for the collector fame, fortune and a gratification like that of the artist when he brings his work to perfection. Many times he had taken his life in his hands searching for this elusive dream, which is the more fascinating because it is formless. He knew the grotesquery of which Nature is capable, the fantasies which Oriental art makes real, and so his search had all the charm of the inconceivable.

Thus far, however, he had but shared the common lot of collectors, though he certainly deserved better things. Never had he so deeply regretted his non-success as one day, when, lounging upon the veranda of a Ceylon coffee-planter's house, he reviewed the last months of his life. For it had come about that Kryte Justican had been himself "collected," and by a pair of the sweetest eyes in the world, and was now a labelled specimen in the anthropological collection of a girl in Calcutta. He would have given much to read the label, and everything to know that he was the "unique specimen" for which Miss Linden's wistful eyes had been looking. However, there was a monetary "but" in the matter, so Kryte Justican, who had very fastidious (and perhaps exaggerated) ideas of honor, came away from Calcutta and said nothing. He had thought Miss Linden's expression odd when he said good-by—had she been any other woman he would have thought it tender—but in her case he dared not. Very soon, too soon, after meeting her, he had said something gallant, and perhaps Miss Linden thought it presumptuous upon such short acquaintance, for she had said, laughing:

"Ah, Mr. Justican, you must not make me such speeches! There is 'Standing-room only' in my affections. You are not the man, I think, to stand and pray!"

"No," he said, coolly enough; "I have a sense of the fitness of things—at some shrines I should prefer to kneel."

"Some?" she said—but a faint color belied her impertinence.

"One," he answered directly. His eyes were masterful, but Miss Linden was not easily conquered. She smiled a little, half turned, paused, gave him a look half shy, half mutinous, and wholly adorable, which completely finished him, and then joined Mrs. Watson.

As Justican thought of this for the hundredth time, he asked himself if she had meant to rebuke his presumption, warn him that she was no longer free (half the eligibles of Calcutta were captives of her chariot), or—happier thought—had he really penetrated her defences and touched her heart, if ever so little?

Musing in this manner, he was rallied by his neglected friend, the planter, who recounted some of his own affairs of the heart.

"I meant the real thing, you brute," said Kryte, laughing half vexedly, the color stealing up under his brown skin.

"Well, you have a plucky lot of cheek!" said the planter. "Have another ricky?"

"No, thanks."

"Come and see my latest importation of famine, then," said the coffee-man, rising, and the two went to the coolie quarters, where a new batch of emaciated, half-dead Japanese coolies were in the first stage of "building up" on rice water. The wily old Jap padrone who had accompanied them upon their "personally conducted" trip to Ceylon had sailed away as soon as he got them hustled on shore, and his count verified and acknowledged not waiting for possible complaints as to the condition of the consignment.

"Fine looking lot of cattle!" said the planter. "I can count three weeks' rations dead loss."

"Yes," said Justican. "I'm looking at that old chap over there, who's a regular beauty. He's exactly like a very fine one-piece old ivory carving I've just sent to Christy's. Look at his ribs! And his face like a corrugated mask, and the wrinkles about his ears! Why, man, he might have been the model for the statuette—that's what the habit of centuries does."

Justican seemed quite unaware of the inversion of his comparison. The planter grinned silently, and, when his guest went to talk to the old coolie, shrugged his shoulders and returned to his piazza and his gin rickies.

When the starved Oriental heard himself addressed in his own language and in a scholarly dialect, he prostrated himself and proceeded to make various exaggerated avowals of respect and humbleness to the collector, which after some days were justified by the facts, for the aged Japanese almost succumbed to the after-effects of the starvation diet on board the ship, the master of which had contracted to supply so many coolies for the coffee plantation, and who, if he lost on his venture, had at least nothing to reproach himself with as to extravagance in the commissariat.

Undoubtedly, the old coolie might have relinguished all hope of ever seeing the land of cherry blossoms again, had it not been that Justican devoted himself to thorough nursing.

Thus it came about that when the collector, receiving the mail for which he had been waiting, prepared to start afresh on his mission, the ancient Japanese sent for him and entrusted to him a secret that fairly dazzled Justican—and the imagination of the professional collector is not easily overcome.

Long, long ago, ages before the Christ from Whose birth we date our centuries, the Japanese were already skilled in all arts of fabrication. The common things of everyday life were to them things of art. Life itself was less complex, but its components were more beautiful. Gold and lacquer work, ivory, jade and crystal were by these old Japanese wrought to the acme of perfection, but, above and beyond all, their achievements with porcelain were supreme. In the course of time much of their wondrous skill was lost, as the exigencies of foreign and civil war distracted their descendants from the arts of peace, but these ancients wrought with porcelain as though it had the properties of a dozen different materials—spun it as though it were silk,

carved it like soapstone, imbued it with colors as though it were an absorbent bud from the cotton-tree—colors so rich, so pure, so utterly unattainable to us that a tiny vase of peach-blow sells for ten times more thousands than it is inches high—nor was the peach-blow their most precious ware. They did not think lightly of their own achievements, those ancient artificers—and records of notable objects of art were kept in the imperial archives, and from this regal treasury of secrets hints and inklings have filtered forth of marvels made and seemingly lost, long, long since. Then there is scarcely a district in Japan that has not its local tradition, preserved orally, of some hidden or vanished treasure. These Japanese traditions never concern themselves with gold in the concrete—it is always some great bronze or jade image or wonderful crystal ball that excites the avid imagination.

Of all these wonderful tales, the most wonderful and most widely known is the story of the Vases of the Mikado; the tale of two great vases of the inimitable porcelain of their area, perfect and without flaw, made entirely of that peacock iris porcelain (of which we moderns have never seen aught but some tiny broken fragments), and sunk in a certain spot in the sea, to become crusted with the pearly deposits, the coral growths, the saline traceries of the deep. If the Japanese worship their ancestors, they certainly do not neglect posterity, for when the vessels were sunk it was intended that they should remain a hundred years—a glorified version of the custom of laying down a pipe of wine at an heir's birth, to be broached at his majority.

But the Mikado who thus laid up treasure for posterity was soon cut off, and his successors were involved in many wars. In process of time, by the mutations of ministries and the evolution of dynasties, the exact location of the Vases of the Mikado was lost, but the tradition of their existence, while growing more attenuated as time passed, remained, and Justican, whose mind was stored with these things, had heard the story. He had seen fragments of common pottery, taken from Japanese waters, which had, indeed, experienced "a sea change into something rich and strange," and the secret which the old coolie had imparted to him was the definite knowledge that one of the Vases of the Mikado was yet in existence, and when he had told this much, he drew from his loin-cloth a little packet wrapped in rice paper, then in the waterproof cloth made from the lake reeds, which, unfolding, displayed an old scrap of parchment, from which depended a silken cord, curiously knotted, and upon which was inscribed the outline map of a portion of the seacoast of Japan. It was the map of a wide, curving bay. To the left was a red symbol, which Justican recognized as the cypher of that long-dead Mikado who had been so beneficent to the arts and crafts. A tiny dot marked what the coolie said was the exact location of the Vase. The secret had been in his family for ages, a hereditary treasure, but, ironically enough, valueless to them. For they were of the poorest and never could have possessed themselves of it secretly, and to avow the knowledge of the secret would have been to sell it to the territorial lord at the price of unimaginable tortures.

But in each generation of his family one was bred a diver, that he might descend to see that the treasure of the family was safe. He himself with his own eyes had seen it—standing at the height of a man and of wondrous beauty—but, at the bottom of the sea! The other? It lay in fragments embedded in the sand. The knots on the silken cord counted the number of paces it was from the point marked by the imperial cypher to the location of the Vase marked by the dot.

When all this had been told, Justican asked the old coolie what reward he wished. He declared that "a smile from

His Most High Benevolence" was enough for him, for why should he ask for money, or what gladness was there in it, when he might not go home? Or why should he beg that he be set free of his contract with the coffee sahib and be sent home, if he had not wherewith to buy food when he got there? The plain Occidental meaning of this Oriental inversion was that he wanted liberty to go back to Japan and money enough to keep him when he got there. This Justican promised specifically, whereupon the old coolie said:

"I perceive that I have been talking to one who has the true wisdom."

When they separated, a lean form rose from behind a pile of shallow coffee creels, near where they had had their talk, and, betaking himself to one who was a professional scribe among the coolies, the listener got from him the materials for writing, and after laboriously inscribing certain lines, came prostrating himself before Justican as to a god, and besought him, saying that he had heard from the old coolie that the Most High was going to the very province whence the most humble and miserable worm now before him had come, and would the Noble One condescend to take the letter (which of a truth the crawling one dare not hand to His Dragonship), forgetting the slave who had written it, but deigning to glance at the name of the August One to whom it was sent, and so on, and so on, until out of the magniloquence Justican gathered that he wished a petition sped on its way to the great man of the neighborhood where he was going, and feeling himself debtor to the whole creation of coolies he cheerfully consented.

So the collector of floating and sunken treasures departed, and it came to pass that in the coolie quarters of a certain coffee plantation in Ceylon two coolies, a young one and an old one, boasted that they would soon be going back to Japan with their fortunes made. Now the younger one grew offensive at last, putting the tongue in the cheek at the old one and declaring that he would be recalled to a position of power at the side of the ruler of the province, and when the wrinkled patriarch heard that he grew suspicious and wily, and presently wormed out of the vainglorious young man that he had sent a letter by Justican. That was enough for the old coolie. He thereupon sought his master, and made a talk to him, explaining the certain defeat of Justican's plans if the young coolie's letter should be delivered, and beseeching him to let Justican know as swiftly as the devil that talks under the sea could convey it.

But the coffee-planter was a deliberate man in all save matters of the heart. A cable message is to a letter what Liebig's is to beef, and the planter's brain balked at the effort of producing such a concentration of intelligence. Besides, he was not a collector, and mentally he confused the Vase of the Mikado with the china ornaments on his mantelshelf. So he pacified his anxious serf with many promises—and wrote Justican two mails later.

Justican sailed for Japan with the love of Miss Linden in his heart and the fear of typhoons before his eyes, for it had come about that with each wave that slapped against the ship he found himself calculating the effect of winds and waves upon the precious object which he already mentally called his. Musing always upon the lady and the Vase, their identities became interchangeable, and he strove, as it were, single-mindedly for each. For, given the right to woo, the suit seems half won, and Justican knew that if he got the Vase he would have the right to speak to Miss Linden.

In due season he arrived in Japan, and immediately he took a coaster for the nearest considerable seaport to his destination. Now, one of the most essential qualifications of a successful collector is that he be clever at covering his tracks,

for though "Finding's keeping and keeping's having" in the collector's code of ethics, governments and territorial lords are prone to perverted notions of such matters.

Justican was an adept at covering his tracks. Indeed, paradoxical as it may seem, he sometimes covered them before they were made, as in this instance, when, tarrying in a little seaport to fit out the little ship he had chartered, he gave out that he was searching for old embroideries, in the fourfold stitch, so famous, and ancient swords.

Now, the chief steward of the over-lord of the province was in the seaport when Justican arrived, come at the bidding of his master to conduct certain singing ladies to the territorial palace, and he conveyed the intelligence of Justican's arrival and his quest, together with the letter from the young coolie in Ceylon, which Justican delivered over to him sealed, with a mild glow of benevolent well-doing.

It was not long before the collector had his little ship, the Rice Bird, ready. Among his men were two expert divers, engaged, however, in a general capacity, with no apparent regard to their peculiar avocation. When Justican told them to dive they would dive. Till then they took their places with the rest of the crew in whatever was the occupation of the moment.

Justican knew a little of most practical things, and he had block and tackle all ready to be rigged when necessary to raise the Vase. So behold! One fine morning the Rice Bird cast anchor in that great bay where the Vase of the Mikado was waiting for the "heir of the ages" who was to possess it.

It was necessary to wait for the full moon, for Justican had no idea of beginning his work in daylight, and no Japanese diver will descend unless the moon be full. The collector had carefully scaled his map of the bay and knew the precise spot to begin.

Meanwhile, he concluded to rake the district for "finds" in the way of antiquities. The district was altogether out of the tourist rut, and Justican got some very good things, notably a three-headed dragon with a flexible scaled body, made after the manner of a suit of armor. These treasures he had transferred immediately to the Rice Bird, which was held ready to depart at any hour. The Vase of the Mikado would not be on board ten minutes when the ship would spread her lateen wings and be away. He had known many collectors who had loitered until their purchase becoming known to the over-lord, he had stepped in, confiscated the treasure from the buyer and the price from the seller, and left them both lamenting.

Day by day the people came to the collector's hut on shore to display their wares. Day by day Justican fumed and chafed, and night by night he watched the slowly rounding moon and thanked his stars that the old coolie's map was so particularized, for this bay, with its sandy reaches, its monotonous background of sombre-shafted pines, its imperceptible gradations from inlet to sea line, would have taken more than one night's searching—more than a week's or a month's—ere he could have located the Vase. As it was, he had the Rice Bird anchored over the spot on the bay corresponding to the Imperial cypher on the map. He had but to sail so far, put his man over the side, pull up the Vase, get away—and then—the girl with gray eyes at Calcutta.

The moon was near the full when, one morning, a messenger came to him. There was, it seemed, a certain nobleman in the neighborhood who had fallen upon evil days, yet he would not have it known abroad. He had a great store of armor, embroidery, paintings on silk paper, and old ivories. Some of these he might sell, did the foreign nobleman care to come to see them. Part with them he might, but hawk them to Justican's hut he could

not. Still, if the foreign nobleman cared to see them, he would be conducted safely by the trusted messenger, who, having spoken, stood in his scant, snow-white linen, his head humbly bowed, his straw sandals together at attention, for he had spoken with Justican outside the hut, and so had not removed his foot covering.

In three minutes Justican was following his guide between the brown trunks of the pine trees, upon the bark of which the process of growth had left marks like a carven geometrical design. They went on and on, by a winding and ever narrowing way, across a little lagoon where irises grew and where herons and scarlet ibis seemed to regard them as trespassers, and then they came to a typical Japanese garden, with artificial lakelets, miniature mountains, tiny pagodas, in the arches of which hung cunningly tuned chimes of bells; fountains poured from the mouths of dragons, with rainbow fish swimming in their basins; and there were trees twisted and stunted into mere living knots; and, in the midst of this, an eight-sided pagoda of porcelain, into which Justican was ushered, finding there an elderly Japanese in gorgeous array, waiting to receive him.

The room was octagonal, following the configuration of the pagoda. There were evidently more stories above, and this one was not lighted from the sides but from above, a flood of light coming down through pellucid glass. About this octagonal room were hung the most exquisite embroideries. Here and there were stands of ancient armor, and grotesque war-masks grinned from the wall. Ivory tusks, carved to represent the pilgrimage of life with all its incidents, stood on pedestals of jade, and a glorious globe of flawless crystal caught the descending light and flashed it forth again to each corner of the room. Justican paid scant heed, it must be said, to the courtesies and formal greetings of the elderly Japanese; his educated eye was appraising the treasures about him. Above all, a very ancient *nooriman* took his eye. This Japanese palanquin was of lacquer without, while within it was lined with hand-woven brocade of pale mauve wistaria blossoms and red-billed swallows. It had great bearing-poles adorned with rings of silver, and the torch socket and corners were bound with the same metal, not riveted but hammered into place.

Justican bargained for it, and got it for a price that made him mentally give thanks. The elderly Japanese seemed pleased with his choice, too, but suddenly, giving signs of annoyance and exclaiming against the negligence of his people in not bringing refreshments, he left the pagoda, closing the door.

The antiquarian was delighted with the opportunity of examining the hangings, but, after minutely scrutinizing one, he found himself rather oppressed. It occurred to him that his host was a long time away, and that the room was close. He looked for the door, but an embroidered hanging concealed it, and he could not remember which of the eight walls held the panel. He had a strange desire to breathe fresh air, and started toward where he thought the door must be. Midway he swayed and would have fallen, had he not caught at the *nooriman*. His eyes were smarting and there was an acrid taste in his mouth; he felt a strange numbness stealing over him.

He asked himself the reason for this, and all at once he knew. He had been betrayed; he was being suffocated by one of those vaporous poisons of which the Japanese and the Burmese alone know the secret. He was in an air-tight chamber. If they left him long enough he would die like a mouse under an exhaust tube, he remembered once seeing such an experiment.

But why was this? Then his dulling and wavering thoughts centered upon the map. That was it! Yet, how had they known? He heard the murmur of many voices—there was in his head the sound as of a hundred grinding mill-

stones which, as they turned, seemed to strike off sparks that darted before his eyes and dazzled them.

This was the end, then—and a whimsical thought shaped itself: "Exit, amid fireworks!" In that flash of intelligence which, for the fraction of a second, intervenes between delusion and lethargy, he saw the door open and a dozen brown faces peer in. He thought, defiantly, "They shall not have the Vase of the Mikado!" Then he fell, his last thrill of consciousness being a strange and incoherent sense of triumph, which abode with him till he awoke.

He awoke with a sea breeze blowing away the fumes of poison, awoke smothered by pale mauve wistaria blossoms, through whose *racemes* flittered red-billed swallows. After a dizzy moment or two he realized that he was in the ancient *nooriman*, that his brown-faced body-servant peered between the curtains, that the salt-water smell of the wide sea was in his nostrils.

He stretched out his hand—his arm was stiff and the joints worked grudgingly—and the servant helped to drag him out of the *nooriman*, though at one time it seemed as if he would burst it open and ruin it with his broad shoulders. He staggered as he tried to stand upright, and would have fallen but for the servant, but as his smarting eyes looked again upon the world, a very berseker rage possessed him, for the Rice Bird was out at sea, the sun was sinking, and the bay in which they had been anchored was far, far behind!

Then it was that the ship captain, trembling before the rage and the curses that Justican poured forth, came and explained, saying that His Honor had been borne aboard by the servants of the Lord of the Province in the *nooriman*. That the servants had given also their Lord's orders that the Rice Bird take wing at once, nor ever show herself in these waters again. That the Lord of the Province knew nothing of the Foreign Lord, save that in having a cup of saki with him he had fallen into a strange stupor, and out of the goodness of his heart the Lord of the Province had sent his bearers with him to the ship. "Whereupon," said the captain, "the bearers departed, and we, having no voice to guide us save the voice of the great Lord, came away also, for, let His Honor mark, we knew not whether he were alive or dead and gone to his thrice illustrious ancestors, but—this very virtuously—we said one to another, 'We will not so much as profane the person of the Most High Lord by the touch of our unworthy fingers, nay, if he be dead and stink and breed a pestilence among us, yet will we hold our hands that they may see we have not done harm to the Most Illustrious—'"

But Justican, raving, drove them from him, and wrestled with the devil of his disappointment alone in his ransacked cabin. For there was no hope now, the map was gone—it were useless to attempt to get this crew to turn back. Besides, long ere this, doubtless, the Vase of the Mikado was safe in the possession of the Lord of the Province. But how—how had he guessed the stranger's object, when for years the map had been hidden unsuspected in the poorest house in his province? The answer to this puzzle Justican discovered when he got back to port and found the coffee-planter's letter at the consulate.

Justican was hard hit. There were crow's feet about his blue eyes and a bitter set to the lip under his tow moustache as he packed up his swords and embroideries, the three-headed dragon and the ancient *nooriman*, and sent them off to Christy's.

It was three years later. Kryte Justican was en route to Scotland to classify a collection of pottery bequeathed to a museum. Pottery made him muse on the one great opportunity of his life which Fate had caused him to miss. When he

left Japan after that fiasco, he took with him two definite resolves—one to reward the old coolie according to his intentions, not according to their outcome—the other to go once more to Calcutta, spend a few days in worship, and then say good-by to Miss Linden.

He went to Ceylon, saw the old coolie safe on board a ship bound for Japan with a sum which seemed to him riches, and saw on the face of the young coolie as he, too, watched the receding ship, a sickening look of "hope deferred" which checked the natural desire to do him bodily harm.

There remained the farewell to Miss Linden. Justican went to Calcutta and spent a number of blissful days, his heart in his eyes as he watched the object of his adoration. A certain timorousness had replaced her gay defiance. But he, like many worse men, had "principles," and he was determined to live down his own heart and live up to them, and so one day he went to say good-by to her.

He found her on a piazza overrun and shaded by a tropical creeper with roseate, lily-like flowers. They talked and the collector told of his projected voyage to Patagonia, and Miss Linden listened and smiled—though after that a deeper note seemed to sound in her voice—and then he rose to say farewell.

"Good-by," he said, and his eyes added eloquently those things which he would not say.

"Good-by," she replied, and laid her hand in his.

They looked at each other. In his face was unspeakable yearning. On hers—could it be?—reproach.

Then, slowly but unmistakably, her eyes filled with tears. It needed but that. In half a second she was in his arms, and they were vowed to each other.

Two years and six months later they were no nearer marriage than before. Justican was here, there and everywhere. She was in Calcutta or Simla, much run after, but loyal.

Justican thought of these things and almost groaned as he again remembered that fatal slip twixt the cup and his lip. Next day as he strolled through the Scottish museum where his expert knowledge was to be employed, he suddenly halted in the Japanese Room, for there, reposing in a conspicuous place, was a silver-mounted, lacquered *nooriman*, with lining and curtains damasked with wistaria blossoms and red-billed swallows.

As Justican stood musing by the *nooriman* in which he had taken that ignominious ride, he recalled events of that ill-starred day. Once more the deadly sickness and physical numbness chained him to the spot; once more a lethargy beclouded his reason; again he heard the murmur of voices, again, by a supreme effort, he resolved to balk his enemies in their search for the map. Mechanically, like an automaton controlled by some external but superior power, he put forth his hand, slid it into the silver-bound torch-socket, and—

The antiquarian emerged from his trance, trembling like a leaf in a storm, for there in his fingers was something at which he dared not look for very joy, while subconscious memory, spanning the years and the gulf of oblivion, whispered to him how, by a final struggle of the entrapped intelligence, he had wit enough to conceal the invaluable map in the torch-socket of the *nooriman*—and there it was! The unaccountable sense of triumph which he had felt for a second was explained—intellect had been numbly rejoicing at its success.

Kryte Justican went back to Japan, and, independent of Japanese boats or boatmen, found and brought away the Vase of the Mikado. But all the world of art knows of that, knows of the enormous price paid for it.

The world, however, does not know of Justican's first venture for it, of how he became possessed of the secret, nor of what his success meant to a certain faithful woman in India.

THE PURSE

By MICHAEL WHITE

PRINGLE was searching the pavement of a crowded street. A few moments before he had taken a purse and a penknife out of a pocket. In opening a stiff blade he dropped the purse.

"I guess it's no use hunting for it here," he decided finally. "Too bad! Hate to part with that old purse. Seem to have got the losing habit. Second thing within twenty-four hours!"

So he thrust the knife back in his pocket, with the air of a man who brings reason to bear on a bit of ill-luck.

Meanwhile a girl of attractive presence had passed by Pringle and discovered the purse—a small, unpretentious, much worn leather object; just such a purse as a well-to-do man of past middle age with an attachment for things of long association might carry. She impulsively stooped for the purse, but it was snatched from under her well-fitting gloved hand. She lifted her eyes to encounter the fixed gaze of a very old woman. The contrast between the two was striking. In countenance, poise and manner, the girl emphasized the buoyancy, frankness and hope of youth; in the old woman's shriveled bent figure, wrinkled skin and hard, suspicious glance, lay a plain statement of vain dreams left far behind and a sole abiding comfort in money. To this, her rusty black garments and an antique bonnet perched sideways, added savings bank testimony; even as the girl's fresh, carefully thought-out attire, bespoke a faithful response to the beguiling whisperings of Kismet. The girl was evidently surprised at the suddenness with which the purse had been whisked into another's possession, the old woman clearly exercising her wit on retaining it. She grasped the purse tightly in thin, rheumatic fingers, with lips moving convulsively as if from a habit of talking with herself.

"It's not your purse—not yours," she snapped defiantly in a cracked voice.

This broke the slight spell in which the girl was held.

"Oh, no, of course not," she spontaneously replied. "I didn't think of claiming it. I—I am glad you recovered your purse before someone appropriated it."

She nodded, smiled pleasantly, and went on her way. The old woman stared after her with a curious expression of mingled cunning, greed and timidity, tucking the purse away in a fold of her shawl. Presently she was moved by a sudden impulse to creep swiftly into the wide portals of a department store. She plunged into the main aisle, to thrust a devious way in and out, as if endeavoring to lose herself from a chance of the girl hastening after with a challenging: "Madam, I have discovered that that is not your purse." Her fingers were twined around it securely. To the resulting pressure it surely felt as if a tight wad of bills lay within. Her yearning to gaze upon them became a haunting obsession, but she was fearful of doing so before numerous seeing eyes. The rightful owner might be at hand and recognize his property. After some hesitation, she determined on a definite course. She

quickened her pace through the store until she came to an exit into a rear street. Here passenger traffic was infrequent, and no one likely to observe her actions. With trembling, nervous fingers, she unhooked the clasp of the purse. As she brought it within close range of vision, her expression was intense in its eager anticipation. For a moment she poked around the interior with a crooked finger. Then fell upon her a look of disappointment so keen that it was almost pitiful. Never were disgust and chagrin written plainer on a human face. She gave vent to an imprecation, flung the purse downward, and set her foot upon it. This action served to again close the hasp. Then she sped onward with features grimly set, muttering to herself.

But, lounging up against a wall, a street loafer had casually watched the old woman. Since her back was toward him he had merely seen the purse fall. For all he knew she might have been counting over a week's hard earnings. This, however, in no wise entered into his ethics. He swooped down on the purse, grabbed it, and strode jauntily in the opposite direction. The purse certainly felt good to him. Thus he came to where a saloon in the block presented the lure of many beers. He chuckled as he wrenched open the purse and dropped his gaze within. But only for a second. Then he swore bitterly. He crushed the purse in his fist. With a wide sweep of his arm he tossed it contemptuously from him; whereupon he swung in at the saloon doors.

Meanwhile, the purse hit a cartwheel, hopped here and there a bit, and finally landed at the base of a water hydrant. Now beside the hydrant stood a policeman, and the purse found a resting place close to the heels of Officer 7301. The policeman was absorbed in directing a trim serving maid, so he failed to notice the advent of the purse. A wayfarer was more observant. He ran eagerly toward it, but impulsively drew back when the policeman's eye fell on him. For a space he appeared undecided. Evidently a desire to secure the purse rose above the strictly moral code, since, to be sure, finding a purse is not precisely thieving. But it required more than ordinary temerity to snatch a purse from the heels of a policeman and make off with it. Yet he coveted that purse. So he retired to a strategic position under the awning of a grocery and, with gaze fixed on the purse, devoutly wished Officer 7301 would move on. The situation was distressing. In five minutes the wayfarer was due in an office where a promising job was offered, yet there was the fat little purse for anyone's gathering. But, alas! there, also, was Office 7301, six feet tall and forty-two chest measurement, unconsciously guarding it. He waited, cordially anathematizing Officer 7301.

In a little, around the block came Pringle. He had stopped to chat with a friend, which delayed him in minor business on the side street. He thus arrived at the hydrant. He paused, let his eyes fall and saw his purse. Without hesitation he stooped and recovered his property. At the same time, the policeman's hand grasped his shoulder.

"Hello!" cried Officer 7301. "What's going on here? Found a purse, eh!"

"That's all right," replied Pringle. "It's my purse, and I'm going to keep it."

Officer 7301 overhauled Pringle visually and shook his head. It was a nervy attempt, but rather thin work.

"What are you giving me?" he sharply questioned. "I saw you coming—'way off—from the other street. You weren't hunting anything. You haven't passed here before since I've been on post."

"All the same," asserted Pringle, "it's my purse."

Here the wayfarer came out from under the awning to refute Pringle with testimony less than more veracious. He couldn't stand seeing a crook get away with that purse. Never!

"See here, Officer," at last said Pringle,

"if I tell you exactly what is in the purse, will that settle it?"

"Well—maybe so," he replied.

"Only a plug of tobacco," informed Pringle. "The old leather case keeps it moist—just as I like it. Had the purse now for a good many years." He opened it to prove the truth to his statement.

Officer 7301 glanced in the purse and nodded. The wayfarer also saw and cursed his own particular brand of foolishness in jeopardizing the chance of a good job. He scuttered away. That left only Pringle. He began again where the thing started. He sought his penknife and sliced the tobacco for use in the usual habit. He moved on a few paces, then halted to re-examine the purse, for in returning it to his pocket his fingertips had clasped a small hard object jammed tightly in one corner. Presently he extracted it. The object was rolled in soft paper. He removed the paper, and his face became suddenly exuberant. In his hand lay a crystal scintillating many fires.

"Well—I'll be hanged—if I'm not in considerable luck!" he ejaculated. "So here's where I put the diamond that came out of Maria's ring. Could have sworn I slipped it in my pocketbook. Been hunting for it everywhere. Pretty fuss she'd have made had it been a total loss. Guess I'm in two hundred dollars."

Two pair—two lumps in the coffee and two lumps in the furnace.—*Wilmington News.*

Many a little tea-for-two has ended in lawyers for four.—*Houston Chronicle.*

The man who is his own whiskey-maker has a fool for his customer. Many old sayings require drastic revision these days.—*Brooklyn Daily Eagle.*

KEY, RING AND SHERIFF

By RAYMOND E. LAWRENCE

DOWN in the fat, fir-rimmed bottom lands of field and stream and shady cottonwood clump rests Snyderville, a farming town, well fed, respectable and small. East, the Cascades drowse through an Indian summer of hazy purples, grays, and blue; and west, many miles beyond sight, the Pacific receives the setting sun. Lights will soon appear in the large square house back among the big cherry trees, and a crowd of the town's elite ascend the steps. Up the street stands the cement and feed store. a bit farther, and you are drawn by the evening influx of hungry Snydervillians into the "Home Restaurant."

Within the latter place the rattle of dishes, vociferous supper groups, and hurrying waitresses commingled cheerfully with kitchen smells and smoke; and at a rear table, ostensibly reading the bill of fare, but in truth as unconscious of its contents as he was of the plain gold band he had dropped, five minutes before, to the cloth before him, sat Jess Webb.

The suddenness of the clear-sky bolt had, at first, stunned Jess.

His face, however, revealed little—a slight hardening of eye and jaw, steeliness a trifle more compatible with two small scars on cheek and forehead—that was all.

Only the great, clenched fist beneath the table could betray his tension and mind.

The sheriff, who sat on the other side, whose doubt had vanished, and whose stealthy glances heretofore had merged into a gaze of unwavering decision, leaned slightly forward now and looked Jess straight in the eyes— But this is getting ahead of the story.

When Dad Wright, owner of the Snyderville cement and feed store, had yelled, that afternoon: "Hey, Jess! Wonder what these fellows are tryin' to work off on to us?" the required one came from the rear of the building and found Dad signing up for a big packing-case the transfer wagon had brought. A little vigorous work with a hammer disclosed a shining roll-top desk.

"Well, since the gol-darned thing's here, an' I can't use two of 'em," observed Dad with over-careful deliberation, "I'll let you in as a partner. What? 'Thanks,' did you say?" he snorted at Jess's attempted acknowledgment. "Huh! D'ye think for a minute I'd let a wage-slave have that little gal of mine? Not much!"

Thus did Webb become a partner in the business, for such was Dad Wright's method of bestowing wedding gifts.

After Dad went home, Webb pulled from his pocket the ring which was to function that evening and gazed at it and the new desk key thoughtfully.

Later, looking up, he was greeted by Waldron, the banker, and accomapnied down the street by Judge West; nodded familiarly to by the constable, and hailed by the Bugle's editor.

He was button-holed, questioned and slapped on the shoulder.

The Bugle had followed his rapid rise; already it knew of his latest good fortune; and now would Mr. Webb kindly give his birthplace, age and any other

information he might deem of interest to its readers?

The data was given—prosaic fact and figure; but the vista which flashed behind his eyelids—the vista of soft pink, somber stretch, and distant red riot, the road of regeneration up which he had come—that was a vista incommunicable.

"Thanks, Mr. Webb," the editor was saying; "we will get this in our next edition."

Webb thrilled, hardly aware that the newspaper man departed, but not in anticipation of seeing his name in print. The promised write-up in itself was nothing; it was what the write-up signified.

The key and ring were symbolic of victory. Here was Victory! And he thrilled because he had won.

However, perhaps only he who has stopped in rags and drizzling darkness to gaze through the warmly-lighted windows of the homes of others can appreciate fully the meaning to Jess of the recognition accorded him; and even Jess, himself, had almost forgotten.

Sprightly, big and boyish, he conquered the stairway to his room a moment later in a manner that always filled his landlady, good Mrs. Simkins, with terrible forebodings.

"Them stairs is going to break down some day," was her usual prophecy on such occasions. "I've up an' told him so time and again, but he always fergits!"

Nor could she be blamed for her fears, considering that the only light thing about her roomer was his heart. And two hundred and fifty pounds of six foot three energy is rather disquieting when it decides to bound up a nervous lady's stairway.

But this evening she prophesied nothing. When Jess came down some minutes later she was in the hall.

"Well, I guess I forgot again," he said.

"It ain't a-hurtin' nothin' a-tall!" she expostulated. Then, hurriedly: "My, but ain't you slicked up fit to kill!"

Mrs. Simpkins was losing a son. Not that Jess held that distinction, but Mrs. Simpkins regarded him almost as one, and she could never let him go to such a great function as a wedding without first inspecting his dress from head to feet.

But she did not see the force that lay in every line of him, hands, bulging sleeves and pose. It was a too good-natured force to show itself as force. She saw only a big, over-grown boy who needed looking after.

With amusement, Jess watched her critical eye rove, and settle on his snug white collar and bow tie.

The tie failed to harmonize with her primness.

Jess was sent to the mirror, and as he struggled with the offending tie a conglomerate vision of hoodlum, tramp, sailor and cow puncher flitted before him, and a tinkle of glasses, boisterous laughter, a Stetson-hatted tough reeling in song against a bar, "free-for-all" fights, phantasmagorias of seamen's boozing-kens, dusty cattlemen's saloons, "sociable" times on fishing boats; garish of color and sharp, leaped the years; but ever the fight took central position in the picture—first, last and always, the inevitable fight!

He looked with a smile at the two small scars on his face, souvenirs of purple passages in the old, half-forgotten existence. "That kid was sure some customer!" he said to himself, as he finished his task.

And then Mrs. Simpkins descended upon him.

Such clumsiness she had never before seen! The long-suffering bow tie was untied, retied and tightened to the precise degree in one instant of nimble swiftness. Then Jess escaped.

"Comin' back?"

"Sure," he answered, "suitcase, you know."

To-morrow he would take his suitcase, a wife, and various grains of rice on a

honeymoon; and the exit from Snyderville would be vastly different from his entry.

Impossible, it seemed, as he stepped into the street, a clean-cut, spruce young man—impossible, that only three years before he, Jess Webb, had been the grimy hobo, who slipped and slunk from a box car into the "Brick Saloon" right there on the corner, slunk with free-lunch hopes, and was ushered out with instant and violent inhospitality. The two were irreconcilable.

But the disreputable fellow persisted; Jess saw this youthful shade of his past "strike" the big, square house of the cherry trees, saw the Girl, home alone that day, cook him a meal such as he had not eaten in many a month; saw the "hard case" suddenly and most strangely transformed to a big, awkward boy who sat gingerly on the edge of his chair, whose hands worried him greatly, and who stammered at the frank-eyed gaze of the girl as she sympathized with him on the hard lot of the unemployed; saw lastly, the youth depart, a self-abased, thoroughly ashamed and dreaming youth —ashamed that he, a hulking brute, should ask food from a little girl like her when he ought to be supporting himself and some one else too—and dreaming dreams that caused his brain to reel as if with wine.

Had the Girl brown hair? Had she worn a blue-and-white checkered apron? He did not know—then. Nor did he know that he had starved for love and grown hard and inured to its lack as a desert plant for water. He only knew that love had come, crowded the old bravado out, thrilled him with the vista of a new existence.

And now those dreams in which he floated down the steps of that house long ago, and but dimly aware that steps existed, had taken on the substance of reality. The comparison may be odd, but no more than the condemned murderer can fully realize the inevitableness of his doom could Jess realize before this evening that his dreams were dreams no longer.

Six o'clock — so much was concrete fact. Two hours more and then the wedding!

He wanted to think, to linger on the wonder of it all: the respect shown him by his town, the permanence with which he had laid the ghosts of his reckless past, his partnership. Dad, the old rogue, had told the Girl already no doubt!

Thus ruminating, he entered the Home Restaurant, went to his old table with a zestful, "Sure, roast beef!" to the waitress's query, then promptly forgetting that the crowd in the place must delay his order at least twenty minutes, his fingers sought and brought out the ring.

It was fascinating, this symbol. It symbolized the final step in his regeneration!

The past was decently buried—left behind with relinquished associates. The old fights were fading into dream mists, and as he idly picked up the bill of fare to look for the pie list he noted with amusement his clean, smooth knuckles. In the old days those knuckles were habitually bruised and skinned.

A heavy set, mustached man, bronzed of face, gray-shirted, brown-suited and slovenly, sat down facing him, and shot forth a quick glance from under bushy brows.

Another glance followed, fleeting and portentous.

The man's presence was ominous, for Webb well knew the type. Nor did it require the recollection of absent-mindedly observing the fellow walk to the back of the room a moment previous, take a pistol from a valise and holster it beneath coat and arm, to verify his suspicions. He knew the species of old. Further, if impressions counted for anything, he knew the brand—Idaho.

The individual who seemed so interested in him was an Idaho sheriff.

However, there was no need for uneasiness. The yellow newspaper clipping in his trunk settled all fear. Nevertheless, the clatter of kitchen, footsteps, voices, became on the instant a far-off din, meaningless as the blurred bill of fare he held with nervous hand and scanned but did not see.

The far-off, meaningless din took on meaning. It rose in volume. It surged and beat on his eardrums with raucous laughter and song. The room had turned into a bar. The old kaleidoscope of memory flashed swiftly again. Here, in all its garishness of color, came the drunken orgy, the free-for-all fight. There, bloody of knuckle, stood a speedily sobering young giant. Dead, in the clutter of broken glass at his feet, lay a constable. Then, a sober youth swung out of the starry, dust-laden Idaho night to the rods of a passing freight.

He flung the vision from him. Foolishness, this funk over the mere presence of a sheriff, he told himself. Sheriffs must eat as well as any one else.

The sheriff fastened upon him a persistent gaze, which shifted vacantly as Jess glanced up, and with slow disinterest the man began pulling his mustache.

A moment, and Jess knew he was being eyed again.

It angered him. For an instant he was impelled to smash the fellow in the face, or at least to ask him what the idea was; but reason and three years of respectability intervened.

The ridiculousness of the situation burst upon him. That he, Jess Webb, should fear was simply absurd.

It was laughable after all, the thought of a sheriff being after him! Why should he be the one in this place of many? As a matter of fact, was the sheriff really looking for any one at all? More than likely the poor gink, as Webb termed him in mind, merely wanted to talk. Some of those old chaps were pretty garrulous anyway. That was the reason for his confounded stares. Why, any other idea was preposterous, inconceivable! There was the newspaper item clipped shortly after coming to Snyderville, itself incontrovertible. It stated flatly, in substance:

". . . While the true facts of the death of Constable Jackson in the saloon affray last Thursday are not known, the fractured skull points more to the blow of a bottle from behind than to a blow of a fist, although in the latter case concussion with the floor could possibly have been the cause. The drunkenness of all present precludes much hope," etc.

Yes, the bottle theory of the paper fitted in perfectly. In fact, the only strange thing about the whole matter was his failure to realize the truth at the time. The blow of a youth's fist! It was a joke now that he looked at it from the viewpoint of maturity—especially in sight of the fact that any one else of the drunken crowd might be the guilty man. Well, his conscience was clear; the boyhood scare was probably intended as a lesson; further, his years of unmolested endeavor and good, solid citizenship in the little town was in itself sufficient proof of his safety and innocence!

The regretable part lay in the memories brought up by this slouching sheriff who must drift in with his Idaho air and old ghosts on this one night of all others, the wedding eve.

And then the two scars seemed to expand and glow, and all reasoning came to naught. The sheriff's furtive glances continued; when intercepted they fled, only to return with increasing persistence.

A sudden fury seized Jess: his scalp tightened; curious, old-time thrills swept through him. One good smash in the jaw—

But again his regeneration had asserted itself. His fighting instinct was under control. Calmly, he wondered what made the waitress so long, and he looked at the clock on the wall; six-ten—only five minutes, he noted, had passed since the man came!

Lowering his eyes, he encountered once more the other's.

Perhaps the sheriff had been puzzled; but doubts were gone, now, for he was leaning forward straight of gaze and decisive!

The tick-tock of the clock fell slower; an eternity lay in the arc of the pendulum; and in that eternity between look and speech the groom-to-be saw all his glorious, roistering youth leap back: the moonlit ocean, sun-drenched plain, starry Idaho night, fights in dusty street and crowded saloon—exhilarating, flashing, whirlwind fights—and his muscles tightened, pulse quickened, brain judged distance—

But a voice held him, and the old reckless life was lost. The voice of the little girl of the big house held him, and he knew he would make no resistance, for no fugitive from justice must wed her.

"Say—" began the sheriff.

Jess Webb dropped the bill of fare and carelessly folded his arms.

"Er—thank you," said the sheriff quickly, as he seized the relinquished slip like a toad catching flies. "Y' see," he added apologetically, the while swiftly scanning its items, "y' see, I'm in some shakes of a hurry. Train comes in less'n a half hour. Eh—must've been dreamin', did y' say? Wal, I reckon I won't dispute you none neighbor!"

A word to the wives is sufficient trouble for the husbands.

They've drowned John Barleycorn, now they want to smoke out Lady Nicotine.

The kind of smokes made now will make it easier for the cigar prohibitionists.

Every prospectus of a company that is selling oil stock is a gusher.—*Albany Journal.*

CO-OP CO-OPERATES

By HARTLEY EDINGTON

MR. CAREW, who was destined to be Mrs. Mish's new boarder, did not understand the neighborhood co-operative plan, so Mrs. Mish went over the explanation again. He listened attentively. He was a slim young man, and his collar was clean. Mrs. Mish felt sure that just so he didn't want to smoke in bed he would be a desirable boarder. He seemed a little skeptical about the co-operative plan, however.

"Now do I understand it?" he suggested. "It's a neighborhood co-operation, and you each let your neighbors use certain things you have in return for the use of certain things that they have."

"Yes, that's right."

"And there are three families of you, you say? Well, don't you ever happen to want the same thing at the same time? I would rather think so. The 'phone, for instance?"

"Oh, not often," cried Mrs. Mish eagerly. "Now, you see, I have the telephone and a lawn mower and sewin' machine. Then Mrs. Dagget—that's her next door. She ain't got any husband, but she's a remarkable good manager—well, Mrs. Dagget's got a horse and buggy and carpet-sweeper. Then the Carters live in the next house. They've got a bathtub, a washin' machine and a piano. And any time the Daggets or Carters want to use any of the things I've got—the 'phone or lawn mower, et cetery—they just come and use it. And whenever we want to use any of the special things they have, we do the same. It's been going about two months now, and we think it works fine, so far."

"I see. Ah, what's the horse like, anyhow? Can it travel?"

"Well, it's a kind of sawed-off-looking animal, but the buggy has a red plush seat. We think Co-op is quite a horse all right, though I think she needs a tight rein."

"Co-op?"

"Oh, yes, Co-op is the horse. She sorta belongs to all of us in the co-operative plan, you know, so we call her Co-op. Miss Carter—lives in the third house where they have the bathtub, and washing' machine and piano, you remember—well, Miss Carter, Miss Catherine, thought of it."

"Ah, well— Miss Carter, did you say?" Carew waited hopefully.

"Oh, yes, Miss Carter. She's very nice. She reads Emerson, and crochets beautiful."

Carew decided to remain. Arranging his dressing table, up in his room that same night, he heard a strange voice 'phoning downstairs. It was harsh and strident, with few feminine accents. Carew mentally constructed a body to go with it—wiry arms, a flat bosom and a large stubborn head. Then there would be prominent blue eyes, and straight, stiff hair, with a loosened fringe hanging out across the back of the neck. Carew was—to make matters clear—an agent for a reliable, quite reliable, make of aluminum ware, and had learned to connect women's figures and voices. He sifted from her deaf-pitch remarks that it was Mrs. Dagget, the husbandless owner of the horse, buggy and carpet-sweeper.

He was tired to-night, dead tired. A hot bath, and a good rub, ah, that would set him up. Oh, rats! No! there wasn't any tub in the house! To get a bath, he supposed, he'd have to go traipsing down to Carters'—Carters', yes, he believed that was the name—and inquire about their co-operative tub. Lug along bath towels, too, he presumed. He recalled Bo-Peep's sheep "bringing their tails behind them," only it would be bath towels and clean hose and fresh linen for him.

Well, he'd soon have this district canvassed. He was glad Miss Carter was the Emerson and crochet kind. Wouldn't it be great, going down for a co-operative plunge with a Men's Furnishing Department draped over his arm, if she was cute, you know, and read all the new books?

He might as well let the bath go to-night, he guessed. Two a week would have to do. Lucky he didn't care about lawn mowers, or carpet-sweepers, or pianos. Probably Miss Carter couldn't play anything but "Revive Us Again." Of course, there was Mrs. Dagget's horse, he admitted, but he doubted the need of a tight rein.

As he descended softly the next morning, a conversation was going on in the dining room. It was another unknown voice—a woman's.

"Oh, Mrs. Mish! You don't say you have a boarder?"

"Sure enough, Catherine. You must certainly meet him." It was Miss Carter, then. Carew stuck out his mouth peevishly.

"I bet it won't do no good," put in Mr. Mish. "I bet he's took already."

"I'll be having to 'phone a dozen times a day," gaily declared Miss Carter. Carew waited a moment. Then he stepped into the room

He found himself presented to a straight, small girl with velvet eyes. While he held her hand, he decided that her throat was good, and her color better than he had lately appraised. She took him in calmly, which was hardly fair. She should have looked away, and murmured of the weather.

"I hope you'll like it here," she said. "I understood you will be here several weeks." Her voice, he decided later, was like cool beads of falling quicksilver.

"Yes," he assented eagerly.

"Well, just call when you want to use the—the—the washing machine!" she invited gaily.

After she had gone, he tried to readjust. Emerson! She didn't talk it or look it. Crochet! Was that lovely low collar-affair she had on, crochet? Why, he thought only frumpy old ladies crocheted, and then they did bedspreads and these clock-shelf tidies.

On his request, Mrs. Mish gladly promised to take him down to Carters' that very evening, so he could be properly introduced to the family and get "the bearings of that co-operative tub," as he put it.

"We'll go early, and get Catherine to play and sing some for us," she suggested.

"Fine! A piano is a great thing. I'm lost without one within range."

It was a shimmery Sunday afternoon some weeks later, and in Mrs. Dagget's buggy with the red plush seat, were Carew and Catherine Carter. Co-op ambled contentedly with flopping rein. Miss Carter fanned herself with Carew's straw hat, while he switched the weeds with Mrs. Dagget's new fifty-cent whip. They were trying to co-operate.

"Do you know, I don't believe the co-operative plan will last much longer," she said suddenly.

"Why?"

"Because Mrs. Dagget isn't playing fair."

"What's the matter?"

"Well, she keeps Mrs. Mishs' sewing machine when she needs it herself, and breaks up all the needles and never gets any new ones. Then she uses the co-

operative 'phone outrageously. She conducts all of her business over it. Mrs. Mish had to call her to the 'phone seven times yesterday. What's more, Mishs' lawn is all dying because the co-operative hose and lawn mower are always at Daggets' when Mr. Mish has time to use them."

"You didn't mention the co-operative bathtub," said Carew deliberately. "How many hours a day does she bask in it? And the co-operative washing machine—does anyone ever get a chance to play on it, besides her? And I believe that little cub Johnny of hers was over amusing himself on your piano last night from seven till ten, while we had to sit on the porch and feed the mosquitoes."

"Oh," she explained generously, "Mrs. Dagget is just a born manager, that's all. They say she managed Mr. Dagget into realms of glory. Anyhow, she feels she must get her money's worth out of this co-operative plan—and she's doing it!"

"Well"—Carew flicked the grass idly—"why don't all the rest of you run her even? Why don't you all use her things just as much as she does yours? Let's see, she has the carpet-sweeper, and the horse and buggy, and—"

"That's all! And do you see me frolicking with the carpet-sweeper many hours a day, when the thing leaves a trail of desolation every time you forget and run it backward? Of course, there's Co-op—"

"Gosh! Just listen to this!" broke in Carew. "I've got an idea!"

"Don't let it escape."

"Well, listen! You and I ought to convince Mrs. Dagget that she is misusing the Co-operative plan. See? And the way to do it is for us to use Co-op every spare minute. Just keep old Co-op on the hump; especially evenings and Sundays, which is the only time Mrs. Dagget would stop long enough to ride. See? If we don't do something, the plan will break up, and everyone will lose the advantages. It's up to us!"

"Oh, yes, I see! But I hate to plot against Mrs. Dagget that way. And then, she likes you, too. She told me she did. She said it was because you didn't try to sing, and admitted you could milk a cow."

Carew bowed stiffly. "Oh, it won't take long to impress her. Come on—or does Emerson think that shrewd ladies should be allowed to bask in co-operative tubs as long as they're a mind to?"

"You are nearly horrid! And Emerson doesn't mention such indelicate things as bathtubs. But just this once"—after a pause—"well—I'll be persuaded. On with the reform!"

"Very well. We'll begin now. I think we'll not put Co-op into the stall before half-past eight to-night. There's a grand view about five miles up the road, I suspect."

Mrs. Dagget's light was out when they came back. That lady was a little surprised, when she came to use the co-operative 'phone the next morning, to learn at what hour Co-op had been stabled the night before.

"All right," she said shortly. "Co-op needs drivin', I guess. She's gittin' too fat. She's et up twicet as much grain as Barnes' mare this month."

Wednesday night, Carew and Miss Carter had the horse and buggy out till eleven-thirty. Mrs. Dagget had planned to drive down to the Tax Payers' Mass Meeting. She waited until ten for them to return, and then went grumbling to bed.

Another Sunday afternoon, and the conspirators were giving Co-op her time along the river-side drive. They had left home as soon as it was time for Mrs. Dagget to take the one day-time nap that she allowed herself per week.

"How do you think we are succeeding?" he inquired. "One woman never understands another, I suppose. But she's got it over a mere man even then."

"I am afraid I see the co-operative plan going on the rocks in another week,"

sighed Catherine. "Dad isn't rabid about taking baths, anyhow, and he declares he *will not* take 'em in cold water, or with a chorus of Daggets at the door all crying: 'How soon'll you be out?' "

"Well," he admitted, "I was afraid our system hadn't dawned on her. If we can only impress her quickly, we will yet save the co-operative plan, and get to use Co-op a lot, too. But we will not stop yet. What would Emerson say to a jaunt around by the new macadam road, and back by Dodd's Bridge—home about ten, since she wanted to drive to church tonight—eh?"

"Emerson says," declared Catherine bravely, "that we should—should worry."

One Wednesday afternoon, shortly afterward, Catherine was sitting in the middle of the dining-room floor, frowning into the workings of the co-operative carpet-sweeper. Carew rushed in.

"Listen, Catherine," he explained hurriedly, "I'm going to lay off this afternoon, and can you go out for a little ride, right away? Sure, of course, you can. Well, you go right over and talk to Mrs. Dagget and keep her in the front room while I get Co-op out of the barn. I'd rather she didn't know we were going, just for fun, you know, Catherine!"

"Yes. But I don't see the point."

"Well, you see, Mrs. Dagget was in 'phoning at Mishs'," he stopped suspiciously and looked at Catherine; but really there isn't any point except as usual. Just go along!"

"Maybe she won't be worked."

"Yes, she will. Let her tell you about how she got bit by the last traveling photographer who wanted to enlarge Mr. Dagget. Come back in ten minutes. I'll be waiting on the other side of the house."

"Mrs. Dagget was awfully excited about something," exclaimed Catherine, as they whacked Co-op into a lumbering gallop. She looked back to discover gleefully that they were not observed.

"She was?" faked Carew. "Oh, I guess not. You imagined it Catherine."

"No, I didn't. She was flying around dusting everything, and she had on a look—well, on anyone else I'd vow it meant, 'Land sakes, what am I going to wear?' "

"Oh, tell that to—to Co-op!" scoffed Carew. "Over the hills and far away for us, and if Mrs. Dagget gets too excited she can cool off under the co-operative hose. I think it has been at her place a month. Move on, Co-op! That's a beastly crawl for an animal that's 'et' as much grain as you have this month. Say, but this red plush is hot!"

"Seems to me Co-op *is* awfully slow today," said Catherine, after an hour of cool and fragrant dallying along the river road. They were just emerging into the afternoon glow. "That's the third time she has stopped stock still."

"Lazy!" pronounced Carew, bringing down the whip. "Needs a little of the whalebone, you see." Co-op started up draggingly, but soon settled back into an irritating poke.

Early the following morning, on her own back porch, stood Mrs. Dagget, before a little group of people. The group consisted of the three co-operative families with their attachés—the Mishs' boarder and the Carters' dog. Mrs. Dagget had summoned them all hither, herself. Carew alone, thought he knew what was going to happen. Catherine suddenly suspected that he did, too.

Mrs. Dagget's hair was, as usual, at half-mast fringe. Her top hair was pitched too far forward, and her wrapper—some women are born so—was short in front. Her shoes were decrepit and milk-spattered. But her glance was splendid.

"Well!" she began tersely, "we'll get it over quick. Listen! I guess Mr. Carew and Miss Catherine don't know that they took Co-op off yesterday when I wanted her worst, when I simply had to have her!" She shot a glance at each, but missed the sudden gleam that flashed

over Catherine Carter's face, and Carew's well-done concern.

"Well! This is why I wanted her: My cousin telephoned long-distance, yesterday, that she'd be in on that four-o'clock afternoon train—right in the heat, of course—and wanted me to meet her, as she wasn't much of a walker, and had lots of baggage. Well! I went to hitch up before I dressed. No horse! No buggy! Mad—I coulda relished clam shells. I got dressed, anyhow. I was gettin' madder every minute.

"Well! little after three I saw I'd have to walk. I started. Hot! I looked like pudding before I got six blocks. And I was tired out, and my skirt kept wadin' up around my knees, till I could a tore it off. And think of the time I was wastin'!" she paused to cool. No one spoke.

"Well! I got there, and Jane come. She's forty pound heavier'n when I saw her last. Walk back with me? She couldn't a walked twenty yards with them hat-boxes and valises and that narrow-gauge skirt. And she *wouldn't*, either. She wouldn't budge. So we visited till the next train come, and Jane clumb right on. And I don't know as I blame her, either. She was only going to stay a day, anyhow.

"Well! When I got Jane off my mind I started back. Then I began to boil some more at Mr. Carew and Catherine. Oh, but I was mad! If I could a had a holt of 'em—but suddenlike it comes to me, do they use Co-op any more than I do all their things, the grass cutter 'n hose, 'n 'phone, 'n bathtub, n' piano. And come to think about it, everything on the list that was movable was at my place right then, and had been since I don't know when. Say, that cooled me off some, and I begun to hope that you folks hadn't ever noticed.

"Well! by the time I got home I wasn't mad much. Course I got to thinking that now I wouldn't be out the meals that Jane didn't eat—and she's an awful eater.

"So I want to say public that I been careless, and now I'm going to be a little more reasonable, and—"

She was interrupted by a sharp, insistent cry from the barn. Johnny Dagget had wandered off. It was his voice:

"Ma-ma! Ma-ma! C'mere quick. Co-op's dead! Hey, can't you hear? Co-op's dead!" He appeared at the barn door, and the frightened, incredulous group flowed upon him. "She won't move, and her legs all stick out stiff!"

They huddled about in the stall. Poor Co-op lay stark and inert, already stiffened into ugliness. Mrs. Dagget stooped over the horse in a daze. She passed a slow hand over Co-op's neck and head and side. "'Fraid she died a-hurtin'," she said huskily.

"Gosh!" groaned Carew, when they were outside again. He was thinking of how Co-op had lagged along the dusty roads yesterday, and how they had urged her. Perhaps Catherine was thinking of the same thing.

"Say, Mrs. Dagget"—he did not falter—"I guess I drove old Co-op yesterday too—"

"Don't talk about it now," commanded Mrs. Dagget, waving her hand. "Paw owned Co-op's mother, and she died same way, now that I think of it. I'll have to git her hauled off, though. Poor old thing! I wonder who'll do it cheapest? Well, won't have to feed her any more. It'll break up the co-operation, though, folkses, I guess. Well, well! And just after I had reformed, too." She chuckled grudgingly, like a pebble rolling in a box.

"I'll see to having Co-op taken away myself, if you like, Mrs. Dagget," said Carew earnestly.

"Well, now! that's kind," nodded Mrs. Daggett briskly. Truly Co-op's death was almost turning into a source of profit; for there was the hide. She ought to get six or eight dollars for it.

And not only did Carew provide for Co-op's last rites, but with Catherine's

help he planned a farewell party for the disorganized co-operative plan. He ordered a freezer of ice cream and fancy cakes from down town, and they invited all the neighbors and talked Mrs. Dagget into consenting to act as hostess.

Mrs. Dagget wore her black dress—with her hair in a fringe at the back—and served. Everybody had a great time, and there was plenty of ice cream.

Sitting cosily tête-à-tête on a quilt-covered bench under the stairs were Carew and Catherine.

"If you weren't going away so soon, I'd tell you that you were cruel, positively inhuman to Mrs. Dagget."

"You just say that, Catherine, because I didn't dare tell you beforehand all about it. Really, who's the worse? We've had lots of nice rides—haven't we, Catherine? Mrs. Dagget is happy, and now even Co-op is better off."

Just at this moment they heard Mrs. Dagget washing dishes. "Let's go help her," she whispered.

"Say," exclaimed Mrs. Dagget happily, as she thriftily removed the soap from the dish water, "I've just had a good idea. Do you know what I'm going to do with the buggy? I'm going to sell it and have a bathtub put in—not a co-operative one this time."

Rum's Seven Cardinal Virtues

It interfered with work—therefore it promoted the play instinct.

It made healthy people sick—thereby inculcating the value of health.

It filled the jails Sunday morning—thereby saving thousands from the movie mania.

It wrecked homes—in that way hastening the happiness of those unhappily wedded.

It caused the tongue to wag—thereby promoting truth-telling.

It kept late hours—thereby curing insomnia.

It gave some men "Dutch courage"—which is better than none.

—Benjamin De Casseres in the New York Evening Sun.

A DICTIONARY IN THE DESERT

By ROBERT C. McELRAVY

ON the broad, oven-hot plain of the Arizona desert lay a man, stretched to the full of his generous length in the shadow of a spread of discolored canvas.

He was not suffering from hunger or thirst. It was merely an off day with Fred Haines, and he was luxuriating in idleness, so far as locality and circumstances permitted. At their mining camp, some distance away, his partner, Jack Winn, was shuffling about in a pretense of activity. But on the whole work was suspended, while they awaited delivery of some mining machinery from Tucson.

So Haines idled, mooning over a small volume in his hand, labeled on its grimy cover, "Webster's Pocket Dictionary." Nearby lay discarded copies of "David Copperfield" and a volume of Kipling's tales. Read and re-read, the freshness had gone from them. Hence the dictionary.

Combining all literature, it had never failed to furnish him with some new, poignant interest. "Words, words, words!" Each time he found new ones he had never used in his days as a newspaper reporter and correspondent. The book's supply of orthography seemed as inexhaustible as the yellow sands about him.

But sight of the dictionary always brought him a certain pain also. He never glanced at it without feeling the rebellious surge of old, half-submerged longings, which sent the blood creeping more rapidly along his stalwart limbs and into the rough, wind-beaten crevices of his healthy countenance.

Written on the inside page of the cover, in a flowing, feminine hand, were the significant words: "From Alice."

The dictionary, trivial as it was, had been the parting gift of Alice Trenmont.

There had been an engagement, a brief ecstatic year, in which he had wooed her with all the fervor and devotion of young love. Oh, the starry nights they had roamed together, the vows they had made, the songs they had sung! How they had plighted themselves to eternal love!

Then came his sickness—a galling, humiliating thing. Weak lungs, the doctor said. Might be fatal, certainly serious. He recommended the arid Western plains as a possible cure.

Manfully Fred Haines had faced the verdict. When he had won Alice, it had been in deliberate conquest. Another had desired her, a suitor well qualified to address her in every way. But she had given her heart to himself.

Now he had a physical fight upon his hands which he could not ask her to share. Impetuously, he did a characteristic thing. He wrote her full details of his illness, and released her from their engagement.

She had returned his ring, at his request, and with it came the dictionary. What it had all meant to her he could not know, for he had not heard from her again. She did not even know where to address him. Indeed, for three years now, there had been no definite place.

At first the gift of the dictionary had puzzled him. But he finally attached a

certain significance to it. It suggested a continuance of his literary work. Futile suggestion! The loss of Alice, with all her love meant to him, had closed the door of such a career in his face, he believed.

Here he was now, strong and healthy in a physical way, and part owner in a paying mining property.

But he was not happy. Every page of the dictionary reminded him of her. He had given her her freedom, but he himself was still chained in the fetters of first love. Without her all else was as the ashes of dead fire.

Why had he not written her? Where was she now? Was she married to another? Had she forgotten him?

"Words, words, words!" How useless they all seemed.

Slowly the pages of the dictionary passed under his thumb. Often had he searched these pages for some further hint of her former affection for him. Oh, for a pressed flower in its pages—a four-leaf clover—a wisp of her brown hair!

Nothing. Nothing. The book was empty as the desert stretching about him.

He rolled over a little, so that his face came closer to the pages of the book.

Suddenly his eye was arrested by the single stroke of a pen under the word "that."

He started from his recumbent posture. Wonderful dictionary! Here was something he had never seen in it before.

Swiftly his eye flew down the page:

"Thatch, thaumaturgy, thaw," ran the words, in regular order.

Ah, here came the article "the." Under this was another pen stroke, a little faded and obscure now, but still discernible. It seemed to strike up at him like a heat wave from the burning desert.

On he read, word after word in the "t" columns. No further developments.

Hold a moment! Here's a word underscored, toward the last of the t's—"truly."

Perspiration beaded Fred Haines's brow. He was acclimated to the external fire, but this living flame of hope now springing up within him could not be controlled.

His fingers flashed at random through the book. What did the marked words mean? A message? Some oracle from the fount of love about to break the long silence?

Page after page at the beginning of the book developed nothing.

Wait—yes! Here's the word "never," underscored like the rest.

Four words now! He noted them down on a fly leaf with the stub of a pencil.

Then once more through the pages—slowly—so slowly.

Here's another! The word "has." Now altogether they read:

"That, the, truly, never, has."

No meaning yet. Tediously, painfully, he began again at the very first page.

The sun beat down with its hottest fire of the afternoon, seeming to render the canvas almost transparent. The twin flame within him blazed up feverishly to meet the other.

He ran over all the a's, b's, c's, d's and e's, with sinking hopes. Not a word was underscored.

Then came the f's. "Faint, fashion, film, flash, fob, foe, follow—" No mark of any kind. Yes, here was another, the word "forgets."

He set it down and continued his examination of the book.

His hands were now dripping with moisture. Grime and dirt contaminated the pages as he turned them. He washed his fingers with water from his flask, though it could be illy spared for the purpose. The book must not be further soiled.

The list of g's developed no orthographical pay dirt. Again fears caught him, but he went bravely on to the h's.

"Habit, halve, haste, head, hear—heart!" There was a word of words,

blazing away like a gold nugget in the sun. Pay dirt, sure!

He set it down in nervous haste and continued the search.

It was long in coming, the next word, but at last his ravenous eye fastened upon it. The word was "loved." With what wonderful meaning could it be charged?

Dimly he discerned his partner coming up from the camp, between the clumps of sage brush and mesquite.

Back to the words he went, setting them down in the order he had found them:

"That, the, truly, never, has, forgets, heart, loved."

He studied them closely. Was this all?

Again his eyes roamed out to the mesquite. Memory caught him in its thrall—

He stood in the parlor of Alice Trenmont's home. There was a piano in the room. A girl was playing upon it. Against the instrument leaned a young man. He was singing an old, old song:

"Believe me, if all those endearing young charms,
Which I gaze on so fondly to-day,
Were to change by to-morrow—"

Yes, it was that old melody of Tom Moore's, he had used to sing. A sentimental ballad, surely, but full of simple beauty. The tune persisted in running through his mind. The girl looked up at him. "How beautiful the words are," she said, "and how true!"

"It is not while beauty and youth—"

His lips were carrying the words now, but his voice was low. Something, an unnamable tightness, seemed clutching at his throat.

"That the fervor and faith of a soul can be known—"

What could it all mean? God! Is this it? Yes! Yes! Here they come—the words, in order:

"For *the heart that has truly loved, never forgets!*"

His voice broke into a choking sob.

She was true, then! She had never been anything but true!

His partner, approaching slowly, found him kissing a small book rapturously. He was laughing and crying like a man possessed.

Jack Winn nodded his head gravely. He had seen men taken this way in the desert heat before.

"Why what's up, old fellow?" he asked.

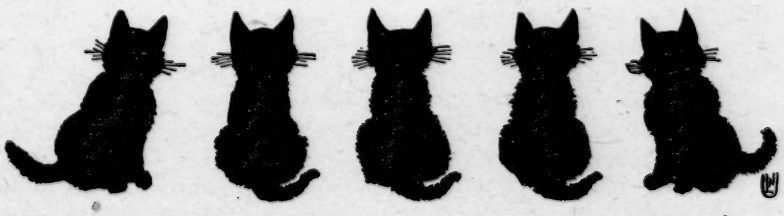
Fred Haines sobered a little; then waved the dictionary in his hand aloft.

"You'll have to spare me from the work awhile, partner," he shouted. "I'm going back East as quick as I can strike the railroad. You see I left a girl back there three years ago, and I think—I hope—she's waiting for me."

"What makes you think that?" questioned his partner.

Haines held the dictionary aloft a second time.

"I've just had a message from her," he said.



THE FOSSIL

By CRITTENDEN MARRIOTT

EVERYBODY in Fairport knew Henry Colfax. Henry had grown up with Fairport. When he was born Fairport was a a village; in the thirty years of his life it had expanded, physically, into a good-sized city, though it still retained most of the ear-marks of the village. Everybody took a profound interest in the doings of everybody else; nobody hesitated to criticise the actions of anybody else; the two newspapers joshed the young men and the young girls with delightful impartiality; and when they had no one else to cut at they took a fall out of Henry Colfax.

Not that they, or anybody, disliked Henry. Quite the contrary. Everybody liked him in a pitying sort of way. He was so gentle, so kind, and so incapable, that he had probably never inspired an active dislike in anyone. Man and boy he had gone his inoffensive way, blinking behind his spectacles, never too busy to do a kindness to anyone; always too preoccupied to seize any of the chances of life as they flitted past. He had become an institution, as much a part of Fairport as the homely old village pump. When some of the progressives had made an effort to remove this a few years before the town had risen in rebellion; what it would do if something threatened to remove Henry Colfax was not yet of record. Meanwhile, the papers poked fun at him, and most people took the limping wit as a matter of course.

Not all people, however. Bessie Norton resented it hotly.

Bessie Norton was a year or two younger than Henry, and she had lived next door to him all her life. They had been in love with each other ever since he wore knickers and she wore pinafores —or whatever the things are called. But Bessie had declared years before that she would never marry a nonentity; and Henry had sadly admitted that he was, if anything, less than a nonentity. So they had lived on, door by door, year after year, each yearning for the other, but each incapable—Henry incapable of blazing out as a celebrity, and Bessie incapable of lighting the fire that would touch him off.

But Bessie did not fail for want of trying. She did not nag, but she did keep up a steady pressure. At last on a certain spring evening, she burst out:

"Oh! Henry!" she wailed. "Why haven't you done something with your life? I don't mean make money. I don't mean become famous. I mean—I mean —why don't you *do* something? You've got more brains than Jack Roberts or Willie McCrew or Frank Radcliffe or any of them. Yet they are prosperous; they are looked up to and listened to; and you—you are fooling away your life over that collection of yours. Oh! I could love you so much if you would once—just once—"

Henry shook his head sadly. "I'm afraid I'm no good, Bessie," he admitted, humbly. "Something's been left out of me and—"

"I know! I know!" interrupted the girl, in swift contrition. "I know—but surely you can do something to put a stop to these hateful slurs in the papers.

Listen to this!" With shaking fingers she tried to smooth out the evening paper which a few moments before she had crushed in her hands.

"Here it is!" she quavered. "Listen: 'Our ancient friend, Henry Colfax, found a new fossil yesterday. Look in a mirror, Henry, and you'll find an older one!'"

Henry smiled anxiously. "Oh! that's nothing," he declared. "It's only Jack Roberts's little joke. I don't mind."

"But you ought to mind," insisted the girl. "You—you— Oh! What's the use?"

"I'm sorry." He very evidently was. "However, there won't be much more of it, I guess, Bessie. I'm going away!"

"Going away!" This was a new idea, and a dismaying one. Miss Norton could not take it in for an instant.

Henry took advantage of her silence. "Yes!" he hurried on. "I never told you, but I—I spent all the money mother left me long ago. When I went to the Paleontological Congress at Paris last year I had to mortgage the house to get the money, and now the mortgage is due and the lawyers have given me notice that they must have the money or foreclose and—and that's all. The state museum will buy my collection, and I must go East and try to get a place somewhere! I'm sorry, but—but I must."

Anxiously he leaned forward, trying to read Bessie's features, but with a half-stifled sob the girl jumped up and fled into the house, leaving him to make his way slowly home. Till late that night he watched the light burning behind her window panes, wondering what could be occupying her.

He did not guess the facts. Miss Norton, though dismayed by the news, was not one to sit quiescent under this or any other blow of fate. Before she slept that night, she had written a letter to Frank Radcliffe, an old school-fellow, who was secretary to some scientific body or other in Washington. She ended:

"... So, my dear Frank, you see Henry has come to the end of his resources and is going East to look for a place. Can you not help him for old times' sake? He knows a great deal about fossils, I believe, and if he can get a post to help in some museum, I know he would be delighted, and I don't think he would do any damage. You know I am not rich, but I can spare $10 a week to be added to his salary, if you can manage things so he will not find out—"

Two days afterwards, Frank Radcliffe received and read the letter. Then he read it again. Then he chuckled. "Knows a great deal about fossils, does he?" he laughed. "Won't do any damage! Henry Colfax! Good Lord!" He sprang up and ran into the office of the president of his institution. After a while he went bask to his desk and sent off a dozen cablegrams and some telegrams. One of the latter, addressed to Bessie Norton, ran as follows:

"Everything all right. Leave for Fairport Thursday. Tell Henry to sit tight till I arrive."

Five days later Radcliffe was in Fairport. Instead of seeking out Henry or Bessie, however, he went to the office of the Fairport Blade, and laid certain facts before Mr. Jack Roberts, editor of that paper—he whose idea of humor had stirred Miss Norton to such wrath.

Roberts was an opinionated fellow, and his convictions died hard. But he was a good newspaper man and knew when to switch. Hence, the Blade that afternoon carried the followed story:

"Once more one of Fairport's sons has won world-wide fame. Our esteemed fellow-citizen, Mr. Henry Colfax, who has so long, so arduously, and so modestly labored in the cause of science, has at last gained the fame which the Blade has so long prophesied for him—the honor and recognition of the world.

"Mr. Frank Radcliffe, secretary of the Carmody University, arrived in Fairport to-day, bringing with him cablegrams

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Five days later Radcliffe was in Fairport. Instead of seeking out Henry or Bessie, however, he went to the office of the Fairport Blade, and laid certain facts before Mr. Jack Roberts, editor of that paper—he whose idea of humor had stirred Miss Norton to such wrath.

Roberts was an opinionated fellow, and his convictions died hard. But he was a good newspaper man and knew when to switch. Hence, the Blade that afternoon carried the followed story:

"Once more one of Fairport's sons has won world-wide fame. Our esteemed fellow-citizen, Mr. Henry Colfax, who has so long, so arduously, and so modestly labored in the cause of science, has at last gained the fame which the Blade has so long prophesied for him—the honor and recognition of the world.

"Mr. Frank Radcliffe, secretary of the Carmody University, arrived in Fairport to-day, bringing with him cablegrams

from the secretaries of the Royal Paleontological Society of England, the Societe Paleontogique of France, the Academy of Sciences of St. Petersburg, the Royal-Imperial Geological Society of Berlin, and half a dozen lesser bodies, stating that these societies had conferred on our distinguished savant, Mr. Henry Colfax, who honors Fairport by his presence, no less than five degrees and three fellowships, each of which carries with it a substantial pecuniary reward. Mr. Radcliffe brought also resolutions from the Cinquieme Congress Geologique Universale, now in session at Paris, hailing Mr. Colfax as the greatest living authority on the early Pliocene, and stating that more than any man living he had contributed to the world's knowledge of the Tertiary.

"The news that these well-earned honors have been bestowed will delight, but will not surprise, those who have watched Mr. Colfax's researches during the past twenty years, and have witnessed the steady growth of his reputation in the scientific world. Fairport honors him as he honors Fairport.

"Incidentally, Mr. Colfax's many friends will rejoice to hear that Mr. Radcliffe also brings word that the Carmody University has voted a grant of $10,000 a year to Mr. Colfax, so that he may be able to continue the studies into the fossils that have so distinguished Fairport!"

Radcliffe chuckled over this last sentence as, paper in hand, he trolleyed out to Bessie Norton's suburban cottage. "More truth than you intended, Roberts," he murmured.

The moon was on duty that night when Radcliffe departed, leaving Bessie and Henry stunned with amazement behind him. Fairport was a beautiful place, especially in its suburbs, and it outdid itself that night. Hundreds of fireflies twinkled among the bushes. Great white moths fluttered over the roses that shut in Bessie's porch. The darting night birds whirred overhead, through the rustling trees. A soft wind came up with the perfumed dusk, and bore the far-off music of the rippling river clearly to the ears.

Suddenly Bessie turned to Henry with a sob. "Why didn't you tell me?" she cried. "Why did you let think that you were incapable—you whom the whole learned world was delighting to honor! I can understand why you did not tell Fairport! If Fairport was too blind to see, it was right to leave it in blindness. You—no, let me speak—you were right to scorn it. But I, your friend! I who loved you and so longed that you should be great! I deserve to be punished! Ah, yes! I deserve to be scorned with the rest! But—but it wasn't like you; it wasn't like your loving kindness—"

"Hush! Hush! Oh! Hush!" No longer to be restrained, Henry broke in upon the girl's words. "Good Heavens!" he cried, "I don't scorn anyone—anyone; least of all you! How could I scorn you when I love you so? You know it! I have loved you all my life! How could I scorn you?"

Pleadingly he stretched his arms toward her and she slipped into them. "But—but—" The words came very faint, half-smothered in his coat collar—"but why didn't you tell me you were famous?"

Henry chuckled. "I didn't know it myself," he declared. "I didn't even suspect it till Radcliffe told me so. Honest Injun! I didn't."

Lenine says that when he is executed, we shall see that he was right. We shall be much more concerned to see that his pal Trotzky isn't left.—*London Passing Show.*

THE KING OF THE SUBDIVISION

By JAMES O'SHAUGHNESSY

MERELY the closing down of the George Salsbury Chemical Works would have been sufficient to have caused a sensation in the neighborhood, because everybody thereabout was dependent, directly or indirectly, on its pay roll. The manner in which it was closed was extraordinary in the absence of an explanation, and the following day it was discovered that Mrs. Victoria Salsbury, the wife of George Salsbury, the proprietor of the factory, was missing. Out of these circumstances grew rumors of a startling kind. George Salsbury had been acting rather strangely before the factory was closed, and his conduct then and since had been of a sort that finally led to a terrible suspicion that would be most easily dispelled by the return of his wife.

For years the factory had been regarded as an establishment that was bringing riches every year to its owner. When it was built it stood alone in one of the wide prairie patches of Chicago. Residences quickly sprang up around it, and these were followed by grocery stores, butchers' shops, bakeries and saloons, until the vicinity was like a little town and was known as Salsbury subdivision. George Salsbury was called the "King of the Subdivision." He suggested the title, it was said. At any rate, it pleased him and he tried to act the part.

He was a tall man, with broad shoulders and a military bearing. His hair and beard were black and he kept his beard trimmed with a care that indicated vanity. He dressed with a punctilious regard for the changes of fashion and spent a great deal of money in the maintenance of his stable with its coaches and coach horses.

In strong contrast with the dashing and handsome figure of George Salsbury was that of his wife. She was small, and her manner was retiring. Her shoulders were stooped and her hands were knotted from hard work. They had begun married life poor and her patient toil and diligent care at saving had contributed much toward starting him as a manufacturer and on the road to fortune. He had adapted himself with easy grace to his improved conditions. She had drudged so long that she could find contentment only in drudgery. When he went driving she remained at home to watch after the polishing of pans and the saving of scraps.

When fortune really came she didn't realize it, and in consequence they drifted out of each other's companionship. His friends were men of affairs and men of fashion. Her friends were the wives of the men who worked in her husband's factory. In time these housewives related gossip concerning her husband, and her contentment, dull as it was, was broken.

One morning a neighboring housewife came to visit her, but no one answered at the door, and the house seemed deserted. The neighbor had come to enquire why the factory had been shut down that morning. Everybody in the subdivision was trying to find out the reason of it. At the hour for beginning work, Salsbury had met the men at the factory door and told them there was no more work there. He gave them no reason for it, and on

account of his imperious and autocratic bearing toward his employes, none of them pressed him for an explanation. He took them into the office and paid them the wages due them.

After the men had left the factory, Salsbury remained inside, closing and locking the door after them. When they had got over the first surprise at being thrown out of work without notice and without explanation, they broke up into groups, talking it over. Some of them remarked the unsual manner in which Salsbury acted that morning; that he seemed troubled and dispirited; that his hair was dishevelled and his clothing was not arranged and brushed with usual care. Soon it reached the ears of the men that the Salsbury residence, the rear yard of which extended to the rear door of the factory, was deserted.

All of the subdivision was in a state of subdued excitement that night. The next morning smoke was seen coming from the tall chimney of the factory. The men quickly gathered about it, thinking work had been resumed, but they found the doors locked and the windows shuttered. For three days they watched and waited for some sign that work would begin again in the factory. Twice at night Salsbury was seen going, by the back way, from the factory to the house and returning to the factory again, and that was the only sign of life about the premises.

These mysterious circumstances, taken with the continued absence of Mrs. Salsbury, were brought to the notice of the police. The next day a policeman went to the factory, but could not gain admission. Salsbury was in the factory at the time and undoubtedly knew the policeman had called, for within an hour he came out and went directly to the police station and gave notice that his wife was missing. He was taken into the captain's private office and interrogated. He said he did not know what had become of his wife, but he believed she had run away while her mind was temporarily deranged.

"Why didn't you notify us sooner?" asked the captain.

"Because I believed she would be back before this."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Oh, nothing. She will come back."

After telling the captain to let the matter rest, as there was no occasion for any police interference, he stalked out of the station. For two days then the police had been active in the matter. The day following they made forcible entry of the house and factory, and the next day Salsbury was arrested, charged with the murder of his wife.

The evidence they produced indicated a crime of the most revolting character. In a big vat in the basement of the factory they found some small pieces of bones and the wedding ring of Mrs. Victoria Salsbury—a gold band ring with the initial letters "V. S." engraved on the inner side. With this ring was found a narrow guard ring. The bones were identified as the phalanges of a human finger. An analysis of the liquid in the vat in which the rings and bones were found showed it to be a solution of potash. It was deduced from this and the corroborative evidence obtained that Salsbury had put the body of his wife into a vat of boiling potash and reduced it until nothing recognizable remained but tiny fragments of bones and the telltale rings.

While the world was shuddering at the horror of the crime with which he was charged, Salsbury remained calm and seemingly unconcerned. He took the trouble, however, to employ legal counsel and set up in defence that his wife was not dead and that the rings were not his wife's rings. In further disproof of the State's theory of the murder he contended that a human body could not be disintegrated by potash in the manner indicated. To sustain this contention a cadaver of a woman, of the size and age

of his wife, was taken to the factory and boiled in the same vat, under the conditions alleged by the State.

This weird proceeding was witnessed by anatomists, chemists, surgeons, microscopists and osteologists. Their testimony was that such a process could not destroy a human body. This demonstration served the prosecution as well as the defence, for it gave an explanation of why the factory chimney was smoking the morning after the employees had all been dismissed. The State's attorneys concluded that Salsbury had fired the furnaces to incinerate what the potash would not dissolve.

More than one hundred witnesses were called to testify against Salsbury. One of them was an old man who had been for years the night watchman in the factory. On the night of Mrs. Salsbury's disappearance he had been sent away from the factory on errands twice. Salsbury had sent him to a drug store each time for medicine, once at ten o'clock and once at eleven o'clock. The bottles containing the medicine were introduced as evidence. Neither had ever been opened.

Another witness testified that at eleven o'clock that night he had seen Mr. and Mrs. Salsbury going from the house to the factory by the rear way. Another testified that while passing the building at eleven o'clock that night he had heard a strange, wild cry in it. In the remainder of the old watchman's testimony he said that Salsbury stayed in the factory all night, spending much of the time in the basement, where the vat was situated. More significant still, he said Salsbury had kept him out of the basement, although that was in his usual rounds. When he was leaving in the morning, he said, his employer was sitting in the office, still dressed and looking worn and troubled.

The evidence on which the prosecution was based, however, was that furnished by the rings. A housewife from the subdivision testified that she had often seen Mrs. Salsbury wearing the rings. She added artlessly and without apparent appreciation of the crushing conviction of it, that they might not be Mrs. Salsbury's rings, because Mrs. Salsbury had not been able to get her rings off for years.

In establishing a motive for the murder, witnesses were produced who testified that Salsbury had intimated that he wanted his wife out of the way, so that he might marry a woman who was better fitted to his station in life. What was regarded as the most clever piece of police diplomacy in the case was the bringing forward of a woman with whom Salsbury was reputed to be in love, as a witness against him. This woman testified, while verging on a state of hysteria, that Salsbury had told her he wanted his wife out of the way, and that he would get her out of his way; that she was a clod in his path and he was tired of her.

The first of the witnesses for the defence testified in support of the contention of the accused that his wife was still living. They testified to having seen her, and some with having conversed with her, since the day of her alleged murder. A dozen of such witnesses testified, each that he had seen her in a different place, distant from Chicago.

Other witnesses testified that Mrs. Salsbury had talked of running away from her husband and had given indications of unsoundness of mind. It was admitted by the defence that Mrs. Salsbury was jealous of her husband's attention to other women, and probably with cause. Salsbury's actions in the factory the night of his wife's disappearance were explained by his testimony. He said he was experimenting with the manufacture of soft soap. He discharged the workmen from his factory and shut it down, he said, because he had discovered his wife's absence that morning, and he felt so distressed that he didn't want

to be burdened with the cares of the factory, and no one could manage it but himself.

The rings were shown to him and he was asked if they were his wife's rings. He said they were not; that his wife's wedding ring had the word "Victoria" engraved in it.

In rebuttal, a jeweller and engraver testified that seventeen years before he had sold a ring to George Salsbury and had engraved on the inner side the initial letters "V. S." just as they were engraved in that ring.

There had been weeks of wrangling over the bones in evidence, between scientists engaged as experts on both sides, and much doubt was thereby raised as to the bones being human. But there was no doubt as to the identity of the rings. The jury hesitated, and then convicted Salsbury, and his punishment was fixed at imprisonment for life.

Efforts to get a new trial for him failed. When it was undertaken to appeal his case it was found that Salsbury was penniless. His fortune had been dissipated and with it went his friends. He could not defray the cost of transcribing the voluminous record, and without a transcript of it there could be no appeal, and he was taken to the penitentiary.

As the prison doors were closing upon him, he reasserted his innocence and his belief that his wife would one day return. The prison officials said that every convict in the place contended he was innocent. Without any useless ceremony they clipped off his glossy black hair, shaved away the beard to which he had devoted so much care, denuded him of his fashionable worldly garb, put him in a suit of prison stripes and set him to drill in the lock step.

Thus stripped even of his name, and known instead by a number, his serene self-possession never left him. He was put at work in the stone yard of the prison and he worked at the hard labor cheerfully, although it blistered his hands. He was then set at menial work and he performed that as smilingly as if he had never been called the "King of the Subdivision." Then he was transferred to the drug dispensary, where his knowledge of drugs and chemistry would make him of more value to the economy of the prison. Now and then, as the years were passing, he would say his wife was slow in returning. As he never made complaint nor violated the prison regulations the guards, out of pity, would humor him and assent. Five, ten, fifteen years passed, and still he talked of his wife's returning. Still the guards assented, to humor him.

Twenty years had passed since he began his life sentence, when a woman called at the prison and asked to see George Salsbury. She was taken to the visitors' room in the chaplain's office and told to wait. She shifted nervously in the chair till the door opened and a great, broad-shouldered man in striped prison clothing came shuffling in, in lock-step tread. His close-cropped hair and stubble beard were white, but his cheeks were ruddy and his eyes were clear. Twenty years of penal servitude had not broken his figure, although it had changed his hair and beard from black to white and had taken the majesty out of his stride. He stood erect almost as finely as when in the old days he stalked imperiously through the subdivision. He looked down on the bent little figure of the gray-haired woman who stood before him.

She studied him from head to foot before speaking.

"Don't you know me?" she said, calmly.

He shook his head doubtingly.

"I am your wife," and her thin, hard voice had not a quaver of emotion in it.

Knots and ridges stood out on his forehead. His breast heaved and his eyes flashed, but his arms remained hanging

motionless at his side as twenty years of prison discipline had taught them.

"Can't you speak?" she said sharply.

His lips relaxed into a sneering smile.

"I am your wife. You must know me."

"How did the rings get into the vat?" he asked, suddenly breaking his silence.

"I put them there."

An expression of doubt came into his face again.

She held up her left hand.

The ring finger was missing.

"Damn it, why didn't I think of that at the trial?"

The warden of the prison entered just then, having been secretly summoned by the chaplain, who was a witness to the strange and extraordinary meeting.

"This woman says she is Mrs. Salsbury," explained the chaplain.

"I would like to talk with her privately for a little while," said Salsbury.

The amazed officials gave consent and stood watching with staring eyes the strange couple conversing in whispers in the furthest corner of the room. For a quarter of an hour the whispered conversation continued and then Salsbury kissed her. Taking her hand he approached the waiting officials.

"Gentlemen, this is my wife. Talk with her and satisfy yourselves. Let me know as soon as you can when I will be free. May I return to my work?"

The warden nodded and Salsbury left the room without looking back or saying good-bye.

She sat down to talk with the officials. She said she had come back because she felt he had suffered enough, and wanted to have him released.

"Did you know he was in prison all the time?" asked the warden.

"Oh, yes. He wanted to put me away, but I was too quick and too shrewd for him, but that's all past now."

"Did you plan his conviction?"

"Yes; I can tell you all about it briefly. I knew for some time he was tired of me. He had got too rich for the wife that had helped to make his fortune and he wanted a divorce. I stole into the factory one night while he was talking in his private office with a woman and I overheard them. While I listened he promised this woman he would marry her as soon as I was out of his way. I need not describe my feelings. I was the same as any other woman at being scorned, but I was more skillful than other women in planning my revenge.

"As I made my way through the darkness from the office my hand fell upon a hatchet. I knew as much about the factory, nearly, as he. I was thinking rapidly then. I hurried to the basement, to the big potash vat, taking the hatchet with me. I knew I couldn't pull the rings from my finger, so I placed the finger on the edge of the vat and chopped it off. It fell into the potash. I tied up my bleeding hand with my apron and hurried to the house. I gathered up a few things in a hurry and went away."

"And then?" asked the warden, prompting her to go on.

"The next day I wrote a note to the police in which I said: 'Mrs. Salsbury is missing. Look in the big potash vat in the basement of the George Salsbury Chemical Works.' I signed no name to it."

"Where did you go when you left the house?"

"That's all I will tell you. That's enough for you to know. I have been dead to the world and dead to myself all these years."

Further endeavors to learn something of her movements during her absence were fruitless. The only question with which the prison officials were concerned was whether she was really Mrs. Salsbury. The chaplain's account of the meeting seemed to set all doubts at rest for a moment, only to raise them the next instant. Would husband and wife have acted so, they asked themselves. Since no husband and wife had ever be-

fore met under such circumstances the question could not be answered by precedent. The story she told was the strangest that had ever been recited in that prison, and yet the warden believed it. The whole affair was utterly lacking in human probability, and yet he could not escape the conviction that it was true.

For the guidance of the prison warden, there were the acts of the courts. A court had declared Mrs. Salsbury to be dead, and he was bound by his oath of office to accept the decree. Nevertheless, he believed it was she who stood before him in life. Bereft of its complexities, however, the situation presented the simple alternatives of leaving Salsbury in prison or of proving the identity of the woman as Mrs. Victoria Salsbury. If the latter were done the courts would quickly restore her legal existence and the release of her husband would follow.

Mrs. Salsbury was taken to Chicago and turned over to the polilce for identification. There were many policemen who knew her husband, but none knew her. Twenty years had wrought great changes. The old factory and the house of the Salsburys were among the few things there in the subdivision that time had not changed. They were standing tenantless, sadly weather-beaten, and going to decay. Through the scenes Mrs. Salsbury was taken and she proved her familiarity with them by references to the past. There had been a skating pond in the prairie. Now it was studded with brick and stone houses. There had been a row of frame cottages occupied by the families of men who worked for her husband; now a solid row of massive business houses stood there. A great cluster of lilac bushes grew in the yard back of her kitchen window, she said. The clump of bushes, surviving the years, was still there. She described the interior arrangement of the house and of the factory correctly. She stood by the vat in the basement again, and showed how she had chopped off her finger so that the rings could be cast into the potash and produce evidence that would convict her husband of murder.

All of this, however convincing to the policemen who accompanied her, was not court evidence. She was not yet identified. No one appeared who would say positively that she was Mrs. Salsbury. Then it was learned that in a distant part of the city the former night watchman of the factory was still living. Without telling her where she was being taken or notifying him, she was confronted with the old watchman. He was an old man twenty years before, and now in his last days he was blind.

"Isn't that old Jan?" she asked, with a show of surprise when she saw him.

The old man started at the sound of her voice and offered to rise from his chair. He was feeble and dropped back into it.

"Who speaks?" he cried, while his lips trembled and his hands clutched the arms of the chair nervously.

"Don't tell him who you are," whispered one of the policemen.

"Don't you know me?" she asked.

"No, no. I thought it was—it sounded like *her* voice," said the old man, shaking his head.

"Like whose voice?" she asked.

"It is the voice of a woman long dead, so they say, but I won't say it. I said enough then, but I told the truth."

"Suppose that woman is living."

"If she is, then you are that woman. You are Mrs. Salsbury."

"I am Mrs. Salsbury."

The old man lifted his hands, uttering praises to God, while tears streamed down his furrowed cheeks.

The testimony of this tottering, sightless old man was adduced in legal form in corroboration of Mrs. Salsbury's own testimony. There was no evidence in contradiction, and as there was no protest of the identification she was declared to be living and an order was issued to set George Salsbury free.

"The rings?" asked Mrs. Salsbury. "I am again his legal wife. I want my wedding ring."

In a musty corner of the vault of the criminal court clerk's office the rings were found and restored to her.

That night her husband came out of the penitentiary, and she was walking by his side. Before leaving the prison he made a written statement, which he instructed the warden to give to the newspapers. It read:

"I am going back into the world to make another fortune. That is all I care for. This is all I care to say for publication.

GEORGE SALSBURY"

Salsbury and his wife disappeared on their arrival in Chicago. The next the public knew of him he was the lessee of the old factory and residence in the subdivision. Not long afterward, smoke was coming out of the big chimney again. He had renovated the building, gathered workmen and material and once more the George Salsbury Chemical Works were in operation. He had proceeded with marvellous rapidity for a man seeking countenance among business men as an ex-convict, denuded of friends, of credit, of reputation and broken in purse. Wagons soon were busy hauling to and from the factory, and before the year was ended the working force had been increased to the extent of the factory's capacity, working day and night. It was said that while in prison he had discovered many secrets of chemical processes, of value in manufacturing, in addition to those he had employed to make his business successful before.

Almost as fast as his fortune had run away from him, it came pouring back. When riches began to return to him he was again called the "King of the Subdivision," as he stalked its highways. He was imperious and reserved in other days. Now he was imperious and morose. He dressed with his former scrupulous regard for fashion, and his beard, now white and grown again, he trimmed with care. Again he had fine horses and coaches and coachmen in his stable.

If he were unhappy, no one could be sure of it. People never discussed the question of his happiness without speaking of his wife. She never went driving with him, in fact she scarcely left the house, and had not been known to go outside the yard since her return. Some of the neighboring women called to visit her as the nearby housewives had visited in the old days. The servant who answered the ringing of the doorbell told them that Mrs. Salsbury did not care to receive visitors. None other called and she remained secluded. She seemed unhappy and broken in spirit and formed a pathetic contrast with her mastering, self-sufficient and kingly husband. The neighbors said she was suffering the pangs of remorse and was denying herself in expiation of the wrong she had done her husband. People expressed sympathy for him on account of the suffering he had unjustly endured and felt pleasure that he was prospering again. None had sympathy for her, though many pitied her.

The people asked one another whether he loved her now, or whether it were possible to love one so miserable. And they asked one another if he had forgiven her, or if it were possible to forgive a wife who had planned with such diabolism the death of her husband. These questions found no satisfying answer, nor did the question of how much justification she was entitled to plead by the knowledge that her husband had conspired with another woman to cast her off. The conclusion was reached, however, by most people that he didn't seem to have any love for her. And now that he was free they wondered that he lived with her at all, but whatever he felt toward her was his secret.

By day and by night his factory was kept going with relays of workmen, and the demand for its product always exceeded the output. When it was sug-

gested that he enlarge the factory, he curtly answered that it was large enough to please him. It was just the same as when he owned and managed it before. He added nothing nor made any alterations. He had simply restored it.

One day he bought a new vehicle. He had bought one each year since he had returned to his factory, and this was the fifth. It was a trap with a high-perched seat and brilliant and gorgeous trimmings. The next afternoon he appeared on the driver's seat, guiding two dark bay horses that pranced proudly in their gilded harness. A footman sat behind. He drew up to the front gate and waited. He had never done that before. The front door of the house opened and Mrs. Salsbury came out, gorgeously dressed and smiling. The footman assisted her to the high seat beside her husband, who held the lines. They drove away and it was nearly sundown when they returned. She was smiling still and he was laughing and talking to her as if he were in a jovial mood. The neighborly folks of the subdivision gossipped about the event until late that night.

Salsbury entered the factory just before the night shift came to work. He called the foremen and told them the factory would not be run that night. The foremen knew the press of orders for goods was always greater than the capacity to supply them, but they knew the master of the factory. He never asked their advice nor took suggestions from them. He was master there and they obeyed. The men of the night shift came and were turned away.

The next morning the factory doors were locked when the workmen arrived. The clerks and the men of all the departments of the factory stood around outside, wondering and waiting. At one o'clock the front door of the factory was opened and Salsbury stood on the threshold. The men scarcely knew him. He was stooped and his face was seamed and haggard. Only the day before they had seen him erect and ruddy cheeked. Now his eye was dull and his hand was trembling. He surveyed the crowd for awhile but no one spoke to him.

"Are all of the men here?" he asked.

"I think so," said a foreman.

"Tell them to come in and get their money."

The men filed in and the accountants and clerks went to their places in the office and made out the time of the men and gave them the wages due. Salsbury was sitting in his private office with his head resting on his arms on the desk. The chief clerk went to the door of the office and stopped. Salsbury looked up.

"What shall I do now?" asked the clerk.

"Are the men all paid?"

"Yes."

"Have you got your wages?"

"Yes."

"Go."

"Isn't the factory going to run any more?"

"No!"

The clerk backed away in silence. Salsbury rose and staggered out of the office. All of the employes had gone, except the office men. He ordered them to go.

They silently obeyed. The door was slammed after them and they heard the bolts shot into their sockets.

No sign of life was seen about the factory for two days, and then the police came. They knocked at the doors, but got no answer. They went to the house, but it, too, seemed deserted, and in the stable they found the horses, untended and unfed. The police looked at one another as if each knew what the other was thinking. One old man among them had worked on the "Salsbury case" twenty-five years before. They asked his opinion.

"I have long since learned to be cautious," he said. "I helped convict that man, and I lived to see his wife come back."

They returned to the station and a

council was held, with the result that all of the available men at the station were sent out on the new Salsbury case. The footman was found quickly. He said he had been discharged without notice or explanation as soon as he returned to the stable the afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Salsbury went driving. The other stable employes and the house servants were dismissed at the same time.

Policemen were posted in the shadows that night, watching every door of the house and of the factory. At one o'clock in the morning Salsbury was seen to come out of the rear door of the factory, cross the back yard and enter the house by the rear door. He remained in the house half an hour and returned to the factory by the way he had come. Nothing more was learned on the premises by the police, but other men working on the case brought in a mass of information, all of which contributed to the suspicions of the police, and all remarkably like the circumstances of the Salsbury case of a quarter of a century before. Then it was recalled that the night the factory was shut down was the anniversary of the disappearance of Mrs. Salsbury. It was the same day of the month and week.

At noon the police forced open a door of the residence and entered. No one was there. The rear door of the factory was then broken and the police went in. They explored it cautiously until they reached Salsbury's private office. There they found the master of the factory with his head on his arms resting on a desk.

He raised his head slowly. His eyes were bloodshot, his face was haggard, seamed and soiled, and his hair was dishevelled.

"What did you come for?" he asked, calmly.

"We thought something might be wrong—that you might be sick," said the police captain, pleasantly.

"You're a liar. You came to arrest me."

"Why, what have you done?" asked the captain.

"Killed her! What do you suppose I did?"

"When?"

"Read the indictment. I followed it to the letter. If you don't believe me, go down to the vat and fish the rings out again."

"You say you have murdered your wife!" exclaimed the officer, snatching the paper from the grimy and wrinkled hand of the old man.

"Oh, that need not concern you any; I've been tried for that crime."

The verdict of the coroner's jury never affords any satisfaction to the subject of the inquest.—*New York Evening Journal.*

A little manicure, now and then, is married by the richest of men.—*Helen Rowland.*

Three men were accused of starting a pillow fight in a New York restaurant and haled to court. How do they get that way these days?—*Don Marquis.*

THE EPIC OF CLEO

By WINONA GODFREY

HER name wasn't really Cleo Richmond — it was something like Schultz—and very likely she couldn't have told herself whether it was short for Cleopatra or whether she had merely purloined it from Cleo de Merode. Not that Cleo bore the most remote resemblance to either of these worldly ladies in any respect whatever. She was merely actuated in her selection by that unintelligent romanticism whose ears are tickled by high-sounding appellations.

There is once in a while in the soul of the most commonplace, unintellectual simpleton a spark of hero-worship, lighting them through persevering toil and suffering that would daunt a Hercules. The simpleton who called herself Cleo Richmond called herself that because she was a simpleton, and not from any motive of concealing her identity.

In the beginning she was a homely, awkward, flaxen-haired, good-hearted, simple-minded girl, whose father had a truck-garden a little way from San Francisco. Naturally, she made occasional trips to market, and when she was about seventeen she began to get city-struck.

So presently she came to town and went to work in a restaurant. It was a cheap, little restaurant, but she was so green that at first she only helped in the kitchen. She was well paid, however, with three dollars a week and her board. Her room was six by eight feet, with a window two by three, and as for her board, well, it kept her alive.

She did not find her privations especially irksome, because, always having been used to them, she took it all as a matter of course, and spent no strength bewailing her fate. Besides, by the time she was promoted to waitress she had also become obsessed with the great ambition.

One evening, out on an extravagant lark with the other girl in the restaurant, the latter took her into the old Central Theatre and there for the first time in her life she beheld a play, a melodrama. From that moment, to be an actress was the one ecstatic dream of her life.

There must be something in the old idea of demoniac possession and obsession, especially in this matter of being stage-struck; and its imp is certainly very often of a most sardonically humorous turn of mind.

The dramatic sections of old magazines (or new ones when she could get them) became to Cleo as Bibles to the devout. From them and from her labored reading of light novels, she gleaned that name of Cleo Richmond, after some dallying with De Vere and Gwendolin and Clarice de Vernon.

At least one night in every week found her gaping open-mouthed from a gallery seat at some play, good, bad, or indifferent, for naturally her selections lacked discrimination. Not being introspective nor analytical (nor, indeed, having the slightest idea what such things are), she saw no reason why she could not do as those happy beings she admired, since she so ardently desired to do likewise.

How to go about attaining this desired end, she, of course, had no notion whatever. But the true searcher finds most things in time. Poring over an evening paper during a slack hour in the restau-

rant, Cleo's eyes suddenly fell upon the advertisement of a second-rate dramatic school. With a beating heart, she spelled out its specious promises. It appeared to her unsophisticated mind that its students were guaranteed to step at once into the most exalted positions. Dancing, fencing, voice-culture, and a thorough dramatic training — all for twenty-five dollars for a term of three months. Six months' training usually found a student prepared to take the principal parts in good companies, which places the school, of course, readily obtained for them.

Cleo did not have twenty-five dollars, had never had that much money at one time. She had been getting very little of her three dollars in cash, because Schmidt, the restaurant keeper, had advanced enough for her black dress and apron when he hired her, and this had to be paid back. Luckily, it was now just about accomplished, and Cleo at once began to hoard.

Much as it hurt her to refrain no more quarters went for gallery seats, not a penny for any tiny pleasure. Tips were not frequent at Schmidt's, but once in a while she added a nickel to her store from this source, and once she actually found a fifty-cent piece on the sidewalk. This seemed almost like miraculous intervention. And when she had achieved twenty-four dollars, she felt herself upon the verge of nervous prostration for fear of robbers or fire or earthquakes.

At last she took the money and presented herself at the Eugene Wetherell Academy of Dramatic Art, which institution held forth in a stuffy hall on the fifth floor of an old building on O'Farrell Street. Mr. Wetherell, a sallow, middle-aged man with lots of hair, came forward to greet her, and to put her almost incoherent desires into words for her. His manner was most attentive, respectful, and encouraging. If he had any inclination to laugh at this great gawk of a girl, he manfully concealed it, but surely such small villains can have little sense of humor. And he was on the trail of her twenty-five dollars. His lips did not even twitch when he wrote "Cleo Richmond" in his little book as an enrolled student.

Cleo, of course, could not leave her work to attend all the regular classes, and, besides Mr. Wetherell did not exactly relish her presence among his students, so he compromised by letting her come when she could and giving her a "private lesson" now and then.

The appearance and antics of the poor girl in the classes threw the others into such paroxysms of mirth that Wetherell kept her out of sight as much as posble. She herself was too bewildered and too engrossed with her awe of it all to notice. Poor Cleo was about as graceful, as light-footed, as quick-witted, and had about as much talent for acting as the average cow. But she chewed away at her chosen art with quite that animal's perseverance with its cud.

She struggled with "vocal-gymnastics" from "breathing" and "tone" all through "inflection," "quality," "force," "stress," and so on, and proceeded to "elocution" without altering her slow, heavy tones in the least, or having dinned more than the faintest conception of what it was all about into her head.

The labors of Hercules were trifles compared to her racking exertions to commit to memory various selections beginning—

"How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank—"

"Stay, lady, stay, for mercy's sake,
And hear a helpless orphan's tale!"

And

"Lud, Sir Peter! would you have me be out of the fashion?"

She came down on the light and airy cadences with the fairy footfall of a hippopotamus.

Of course, by the time the first three

months were up, Cleo had saved the necessary twenty-five dollars for another term. She had had this fifty dollars and six months fixed in her mind from the beginning as the unavoidable preliminaries to her career. After that she anticipated smooth sailing and large pecuniary rewards.

During the greater part of this second term she wrestled with Juliet's soliloquy before taking the potion, beginning:

"God knows when we shall meet again.
I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins
That almost freezes up the heat of life—"

Of this, Cleo was mightily enamored, having an absurd penchant for tragedy. This particular selection she spouted morning, noon, and night, not really comprehending it, but having been thrilled by its mouthing rendition at Wetherell's.

Wetherell now paid very little attention to her, and was quite ready to let her go when her six months were up. Her awkward, poverty-stricken figure, in its worn and shiny dress, her big, red hands, her dull, cheerful face, did not combine to make her a very good advertisement for the school. Besides, he had overheard several of the students observe that it really was a shame to take the poor girl's money, so he had decided to dispense with Cleo.

It was, however, quite in accord with her own idea when he called her into his office and, giving her a note to a certain theatrical agency with which he was connected, told her that he guessed it was time for her to "break into the profession."

The theatrical agent was a seedy little man with a dirty collar and his office was a dingy little den, or rather two dingy little dens, but he made a great show of being busy. He took Cleo's name and address without a smile, noted her line as "utility," and told her to "drop 'round occasionally."

Accordingly, she spent all her spare time sitting there quietly on an uncomfortable wooden chair, her hard hands folded in her lap, a hopeful wistfulness in her round, blue eyes. The people going in and out sometimes never looked at her at all, sometimes stared rudely, sometimes looked away with a grin.

The agent himself never seemed to notice her again. Once or twice after he had ushered some man into his tiny inner room, the man would look out, give Cleo a sharp glance, then shut the door, his loud laughter striking strangely across the dusty silence of the outer room. Cleo did not seem to connect the glance and the laughter. Patiently she sat on, waiting, waiting, with apparently no misgivings no heart-sinkings, just with that stolid, plodding, inexhaustible patience.

Months passed.

Her people at home thought she must have lots of money saved up. She was a prudent girl, they agreed, when they saw how shabby she was. She was not spending her money foolishly.

And then, at last! He was a large man in a checked suit, with a fat cigar in his mouth and a rakish little cane in his hand. The little agent's behavior to him was most affable and obsequious. Their conversation in the private office seemed pleasantly mirthful. Then the agent opened the door and beckoned Cleo.

"Here, Richmond!"

She went to him with a smile of childish pleasure on her face.

"Mr. Goldsmith here thinks he can use you," said the agent by way of introduction.

Mr. Goldsmith leaned back in his chair and cocked his hat over his eyes while he looked the girl over from head to foot.

"What can you do?" he asked, between his teeth.

Cleo had her stunt all ready.

"The—the Potion Scene," she stated, modestly.

"Potion Scene, eh? Fine! Let's hear it."

She proceeded. There was no doubt about its being side-splitting. But neither man so much as batted an eyelash.

"Y'know," said Mr. Goldsmith, when she had fallen over at "Romeo, I come! this do I drink to thee" with a crash that made the windows rattle, "I think you're just what I want."

"Yes, sir," Cleo gathered her ungainly length rather sheepishly off the floor.

"I'm puttin' on kind of a burlesque down at the Columbian," continued Mr. Goldsmith. "Woman who was goin' to do this stunt's got the typhoid. You won't have no other part—just interpolate this in the second act. Rehearsal in the morning at ten. Fifteen a week."

"Yes, sir," murmured Cleo, faint with joy.

As she went out, Mr. Goldsmith was saying: "Of course, you never can tell whether the real thing will be as funny as an imitation."

"You can't beat it," asserted the agent, confidently.

Cleo at once gave up her place at Schmidt's to Schmidt's wrathful surprise.

"Where you go?" he demanded.

"I'm goin' on the stage," Cleo replied, with exactly the rapt intonation she might have used in saying, "I'm going to be an angel."

"Ach, Gott!" cried Schmidt, rolling his eyes, and commented no further.

There were only two rehearsals before the opening performance of Goldsmith's Imperial Burlesque Company, and during these Cleo was not given time to notice the stares and titters of the company. The stage manager finally drilled it into her when she was to come on and how she was to get off, but he made few changes in her own rendering of her part.

On the opening night, they sent a fat woman, short-winded but not unkind, to help her with her make-up. They also furnished the costume, which looked rather outlandish even to Cleo.

When her turn came, the stage manager, who had been keeping his eye on her, pushed her out on the stage. For a moment she stood, tongue-tied and terror-stricken, the prompter shouting her first lines openly, as it was intended he should. Then she rallied and began. She had not been told, of course, to be funny. She had been urged to do her best, and she was bound to do it. At it she went, tooth and nail, with deadly earnestness and persistence, but in a sort of panicky trance. The audience held its sides. This serious gawk ranting and cavorting, was the drollest thing! When she fell over at the last, they fairly howled. The curtain fell on this, and while she was scrambling to her feet, they raised it again, and the audience howled some more.

Yes, Cleo was a hit. Even the stage manager was smiling as she blundered off, and the rest of the company was fairly hysterical.

Cleo looked around confusedly, not quite understanding, not just sure—*Why, they were laughing!* The company was laughing, the audience was laughing—they were *laughing.*

Like an ungainly automaton she returned to her dressing-room; mechanically she pulled the silly flowers from her hair, took off the cheap, freak costume, and put on her own poor garments. Her face was expressionless, but a certain dignity behind its stoicism kept the others from addressing her.

She stumbled home to the room she had rented so confidently the day before, and threw herself upon the bed without undressing. Of course she knew that she was not bright like some people, but she was not too stupid to know that the words she had spoken were sad, and she had not at all meant to be funny—and *they had laughed.*

Of all weapons, laughter has the keenest edge and makes the deepest wound. Dullness of intellect does not turn its point. At last, Cleo's armor had been

pierced, and the pain of the wound smarted greatly. She lay staring at the ceiling, and thought she did not close her eyes all night. But she did.

In the early morning she rose, washed the traces of paint from her face, put her belongings into a bundle and started home. It was many miles and the sun was hot, but all day she trudged on with that oxlike endurance.

Perhaps she was not analyzing things very deeply—everything had not been made clear in a flash. But dimly, vaguely, she felt it all, and she suffered. All her nebulous dreams, her shadowy ambitions, her toil, and stinting and drudgeries, her humiliations and abasements, seared her spirit, even if her dull brain yet failed fully to comprehend.

The sun was low in the west when she opened the gate before her father's shanty and walked between the neat rows of cabbages to its open door.

Within, her mother hovered over the hot stove, and the children's voices rose clamorously as they bunglingly set the table. Cleo dropped her bundle.

"Mother," she said, "I come home. I don't like town."

Her mother looked up from the sizzling pans with the drudge's lack-lustre eye.

"Ja wohl," she replied, briefly. "Put you a plate on—supper iss retty."

THE RETURN OF SANDY

By ROY FREEMAN MUNGER

HE parade ground of the Fourteenth Regiment was baked to a dead dull brown by the Arizona sun. The valley of the Rio Grande was a streaked yellowish unwholesome brown and the hot air above it was brown, too. The khaki tents dropped dispiritedly on their limp guy ropes and the big tanned troopers beneath them were lolling and dozing through the afternoon heat. Even the Stars and Stripes on the tall flag pole hung limply in richly-colored folds.

Quartermaster Davis sat on his cot and thought so hard that the sweat drops rolled off his forehead. Between thoughts he cursed originally and piquantly after the fashion of the cavalry.

In Buck Davis's rollicking cowboy days he had made love, with all the ardor of his somewhat ardent personality, to Katharine, familiarly known as "Sandy" Parsons, the daughter of Ben Parsons, whose farms, stores and cattle interests were strung through four states. Arriving at the marriagable age, Buck's pride had bitten him deeply, and torn by the promptings of what he could not down and would not show, he had thrown up his foremanship and fled to the welcoming arms of the hard-riding Fourteenth. And now Sandy was there across the river, stubbornly trying to save the Parsons warehouse out of the wreck of vandalism, while another day would see Zatara's ragamuffins raiding down the valley. Minor annoyances were, one: the fact that he, Buck, was ordered on a two days' journey for the purchase of regimental supplies; two: the very harsh order which had been promulgated against any meddling by soldiers in the fracas across the river.

Bathed in sweat, with the hot wind blowing a stream of dust through the slit of his tent door, he railed at his Fates with the choice invective of a man who has been forced by years of trying situations to develope a psychic safety valve. Having thus deprived wrath of all its emotion, his mind began to work under high pressure.

He first called in Bainbridge, his chum, and, with restless fingers beating a tattoo on the table, explained the necessity for the journey of a dummy quartermaster to Camp Wilson. Bainbridge assented noncommittally to a deception involving disgrace and dismissal and went out to arrange for his leave of absence.

While Bainbridge was out, Davis rolled his civilian suit into a haversack, wrote a note to his striker to forward all mail to Camp Wilson and oiled his automatic carefully.

At twilight, the two men rode out of camp together, but it was Bainbridge who took the main trail. Davis changed his clothes, stuffed his uniform into the haversack and drifted away to a little-known ford on the Rio Grande *del norte*.

The plan of a marauding chief is a capricious thing. Zatara, marching by easy stages and plundering and burning by the way, should have reached the practically undefended town of Montemaras on the third day. But it needed no more than a hint, a whisper that all was not as it seemed, a suspicion that his rival just over the border, though arrested and rearrested by the United States Secret Service men, was plotting to some effect,

and the lazy cruelty of success was changed instantly to the ferocity of conflict. The deep dry turquoise of the night sky was barely shading into a sickly blue gray, when the first crescendo of thudding hoofs roused the sleeping town of Montemaras to a whirl of blazing buildings, and crashing weapons. Shooting, rushing and prowling the dirty, reckless invaders swarmed everywhere, while above the screams, shot and explosions, rose the hammering roll of galloping horses as the irregular cavalry poured down the central street.

Sandy Parsons was standing with her chin against one of the barred upper windows of the warehouse watching the burning curacil across the road send up pale flames against the ash-gray eastern sky. A rifle leaned against the window grating beside her, and the gun belt, slung over her riding-skirt, carried a grim reality that bore no resemblance to the picturesqueness of the Wild West show. As she watched, a heavily-built American stepped out of the smoke-swirled dawn shadows and stood looking up at the warehouse. A sniper down the road opened on him with a rifle. He drew his automatic with a smooth forward hunch of the shoulder, winged the sniper, and leaped back into the shadows. With the easy certainty with which one follows a familiar route, Sandy picked her way through the heaped-up obscurity to where a narrow door opened on a yet undisturbed side street. Davis came in heavily, bulking large in the darkness and breathing deeply.

"Thanks, Buck," said Sandy. "All organized?"

"Army gun," said Buck. "Building fireproof? Lead me upstairs." In that warehouse, among the farm supplies, were two thousand rifles shipped in by the insurrecto agents. Zatara's men could find use for those rifles and supplies very easily and no sooner was the town overrun than horsemen urged a mule train up to the Parsons warehouse. The operation seemed simple, but it was unfortunate for the planners that the first thunderous blows of a pinion log on the corrugated door should have coincided with the advent of Buck and Sandy at the front windows. Hemmed by sheer walls on one side and the burning curacil on the other, dimmed by acrid wood smoke and raked by the fire of two repeaters, the narrow street became a shifting inferno of plunging horses, panic-stricken pack mules and frantic troopers. For over a minute the hail and turmoil lasted. Then the street cleared; the attackers retired, to post themselves in cover and rain bullets into every window and crevice of the building. Buck tore off a length of surgeon's tape and pulled together the edges of a furrow on his left arm. Sandy felt her way to a box and sat down. A bullet, nicking the window ledge, had almost blinded her with dust, but she had kept on firing in the direction of the melee. Between them they had emptied forty-eight shells and Buck surveyed the littered street with interest. Then he fired twice at a writhing horse, reloaded the automatic with his last clip, lit a cigarette and began to open a packing case of rifles and ammunition. Ten minutes later Sandy got the dust out of her eyes and came over and sat on the packing case where she could watch the street without being seen.

"Better blow north in the heat of the afternoon," suggested the worker. "They won't expect a break then and we'll sift easier than after they've trippled the curb warmers at sundown."

"I need this warehouse," objected Sandy.

"What for?" retorted Buck. "It's nothing to you and you'll make a shocking homely corpse. Honest, you won't be a bit pretty."

"I'm broke," explained Sandy. "This place is all there is left." Buck named his state of mind as surprised purple verging on heliotrope. "You know—poor old Dad—he was scrapping the syn-

dicate—well, I expect the failure was what killed him as much as anything."

"And you're hanging on to what's left," said Buck soberly.

Sandy smiled wryly.

"What would you expect me to do? Teach school?"

Buck pryed off the last board, hauled out a case of rifles and loaded twenty of them, set a pot of beans on the gas stove and the beleaguered twain settled themselves comfortably and sat quietly waiting for trouble.

MAJOR NORTON, the grizzled commanding officer of the encamped troops, opposite Montemaras, was not accustomed to a waiting game. As "Jump" Norton, in the last of the Indian wars, he had gained his soubriquet among men who are not usually addicted to compliment. In the wearing Philippine campaigns, his driving attacks, delivered with mathematical precision the instant his forces were fully deployed, had won many a battle before his superiors had even decided to engage. To his mind, the administration policy of watchful waiting meant nothing more than a reluctance to bring on a general engagement. Across the river, an American citizen of some standing, the daughter of his old friend Parsons, was being attacked in the defense of her property. All day, through the smoke and stray bullets, he watched the one-sided conflict. The warehouse, solid and fireproof, could only be entered by battering in the doors or prying off the steel shutters, and these the fire from the upper windows seemed ample to prevent. A silence fell as the red-streaked yellow of the sunset sky faded bit by bit into ultramarine of wide starry spaces. Twice the Major turned to give an order, and twice he checked himself, and waited. During the night the inferno broke out again, while a series of attacks were frustrated, well nigh destroyed, in the light of kerosene flares thrown from the windows.

The morning dawned hot and still. Bugles shrilled in the American camp, the sunrise gun was fired, Old Glory ran up the flagstaff, the horses were watered by sweating troopers and all the orderly routine of camp life went forward. The thousand breakfast fires of Zatara's men rose from the streets of the plundered town. The sun slid up, over and down. Not a shot broke the stillness of the blackened squares, but from every bridge and ford came a crowd of fugitives fleeing the agents of a man who had learned cruelty from the under side.

The velvet night, mighty and drifting, was marred only by spiteful winking of irregular many-eyed campfires and a blood-red glow on the horizon, that told of the spreading fingers of the foragers. Zatara was waiting for a column which had been left behind in the haste of his advance. At ten o'clock the next morning, the line of bedraggled field artillery plodded into sight followed by a long train of ammunition wagons which carried the one essential of the raiders.

It was an evil moment for Captain Ventena when he suspected a peon named Pedro of having rifles concealed in his abode shack. While Pedro parleyed, Pedro's wife slipped across the bridge with the guns hidden in a rough hand cart. By the time the information was tortured out of Pedro, the woman was nearly across, Ventena, cold with anger, pursued at a headlong gallop. Almost instantly, the pursuit came into collision with Angus Martin, sentry at the American end of the bridge. Ventena's blood flared; he shot Martin and sabered the peon woman, the wife of Pedro.

Major Norton, reckless of his own career and with a vision of old Ben Parsons before his eyes, had begun to mobilize his men at the first sight of the artillery. At this last outrage, his tentative plans burst out in volcanic commands and before the first badly aimed shell had burst through the roof of the warehouse, Ventena's crew were

smashed like flies as two companies of the Fourteenth tore across the bridge and spread fanwise to cover its approaches. Behind them raced line after line of infantry at double quick, while the cavalry camp, galvanized by "Boots and Saddles," vomited a torrent of hurrying, hot-blooded troopers. Zatara was not caught napping. His men were ready and brimming with gringo hate. But at best they were only irregular and badly mounted cavalry. With swift, hammerlike charges, they were driven back by stubborn, straight shooting infantrymen.

The Mexican artillery succeeded in landing only three shells on the bridge (out of fifteen attempts) before they were forced back by the advancing line. Braced by hurrying re-enforcements and urged by the drumming of machine guns, the infantry carried the Stars and Stripes forward along two horns of a crescent until only the Mexican center held against the impact. Through the sweat and smoke-haze and the rush of hand-to-hand fighting, the two horns pressed slowly inward. Then the center opened wide and through the cheering ranks swept that rarest and most glorious of war spectacles, a smashing cavalry charge.

Two squares ahead of it, around the corner of the Parsons warehouse, galloped Qurtermaster Buck Davis, miraculously returned from his trip in the nick of time; Buck Davis, jamming his heels into the ribs of a naked bronco and heading straight for the unlimbering batteries. In each hand was a stick of giant blasting powder, the fuses sputtering as he rode. The first stick struck end on and put out the fuse, but the second exploded just off the ground and wrecked the battery. Davis, miraculously unhit, kept straight on into the melee, dove headlong from his horse, rolled under an ammunition wagon, came out on the far side, and ducked beneath the belly of a kicking horse, under the erratic fire of several frantic artillerymen.

The artillerymen vanished, disappeared, were blotted out as the charging American cavalrymen swept through like a crashing, lightning-flecked tornado.

Buck crouched by the ammuniton wagon until the last horse had passed. Then he sighed and walked slowly back to the warehouse. The fighting was over.

By the time when the long afternoon shadows began to merge into the coolness of sunset, the following events had taken place: Zatara had been taken to an American jail for instigating the murder of Angus Martin, the sentry killed at the bridge. His troops had been disarmed and disbanded. The outlying fragments of his army had scattered voluntarily to the four winds. Quartermaster Davis had been recommended for promotion for distinguished gallantry in action.

Sandy was upstairs in the warehouse checking up vouchers. Downstairs a stiff and spruce West Pointer was doling out farm supplies to the returning refugees. Buck came upstairs and pretended to look over her shoulder.

"How do you come out?" he asked.

"Counting the outstanding bills as nothing and the land and buildings as minus nothing, which they are about worth, I just break even."

"That's good," said Buck. "Do you think you could help me run the circle X Ranch?"

"What have you got to do with the Circle X?" retorted Sandy. "And who said I was going to help you do anything?"

"I can get the Circle X on half shares, and my enlistment is up next month," said Buck. "You're subpœnaed. This paper is a marriage license."

Sandy read the license through. After a moment's deliberation she spoke half tenderly, half amusedly.

"That's a good idea of yours, Buck. Got a preacher?"

"He's downstairs."

"Let's go find him," said Sandy.

THE MISSIONARY SNAKE

By WILLIAM MERRIAM ROUSE

EDGAR RALEIGH was an imaginative boy, his grandmother said, and probably that was why he had named his garter snake Clarissa Jackson. Clarissa Jackson was the name of the girl in a book he had taken from the shelves in the sitting-room one afternoon when Uncle Nathaniel Raleigh had gone to a G. A. R. meeting and Grandma Raleigh to a missionary tea at the same time. Miss Jackson was described as moving "with sinuous seductiveness, the train of her bizarre evening gown curling behind her." Edgar had looked up the words and the description seemed to fit his pet, particularly after he had nursed her back to health. Whether Clarissa was a lady or a gentleman snake, Edgar had not the faintest idea, but she had seemed feminine in all her coquettish movements from the very day, a week before, when he had found her lying on the roadside at the edge of the village, where she had been left for dead by some unimaginative person.

Edgar sat on the south porch and admired the green and black stripes that ran from Clarissa's flat head to the tip of her tail. She had wrapped her twelve-inch length—she was still very young—in a neat coil on his knee and now basked contentedly in the afternoon sun. It was one of those rather rare occasions when it was safe to take Clarissa out of her box in the barn and bring her to the house. Whistled strains of "The Wearin' of the Green" told that Katie was busy in the kitchen. It was the hour when Uncle Nathaniel took his nap, and when he came downstairs it would be to go for his daily constitutional. The constitutional was made certain to-day by Miss Sarah Armstrong, anxious spinster, who was calling in the south parlor and pouring a steady stream of missionary, temperance, and other talk, into Grandma Raleigh's patient ears. Pete Abare, periodical "help," did not count, although he kept his dinner pail and bag of tobacco on the south porch and left his task of mowing the lawn, at brief intervals, to refill his pipe. He always seemed busy with his own thoughts—so much so that he sometimes muttered to himself, and when spoken to rolled an eye that did not look as though it saw. It was only necessary to spread a hand over Clarissa when he appeared.

Through the open windows of the south parlor came the steady hum of Miss Armstrong's conversation, broken now and then by reply or comment in grandma's voice. The south porch was back of the parlor, screened by an angle of the house, and Edgar was not only safe from observation, but the cackle of Miss Armstrong's parting would warn him when grandma might be expected to move about the house. Now and then words and even whole sentences of the conversation become audible as the women unconsciously raised their voices.

". . . . such a *good* boy," Miss Armstrong was saying, "and with such a soulful expression in his face. I couldn't help but observe it last Sunday as he sat by your side in church Mis' Raleigh, as I was sayin' to Mis' Peabody only yesterday. I hope she realized the difference between him and that brat of hers!"

"I have tried to bring him up as a

Raleigh," came in grandma's gentle tones, and Edgar realized, with a sick feeling, that they were talking about him. If there was anything he hated it was to be accused of a soulful expression. It made him think of pictures of angels and of Sissy Brown, who wore a flat white collar and a big bow under his chin, although he was twelve years old. It was at such times as this that Edgar wished he could be a pirate with a moustache and gold rings in his ears. He hated his blue eyes and his fair skin that refused to tan or freckle, with a deadly and never-waning hatred. Grandma was pretty good, he had to admit, but she did not understand why a boy of ten should want shirts and suspenders instead of neat waists that buttoned to his trousers, and she would never in the world have accepted Clarissa as a member of the family.

Clarissa raised her head and hissed. Edgar drew a small pasteboard box from his trouser's pocket and opened it. Three somewhat damaged angle worms and a dozen dead flies were the contents. He set the box carefully on the knee opposite Clarissa, but she scorned the offering, and her owner felt with growing misgiving that perhaps he did not understand the dietary of snakes. So far as he knew, she had not eaten in a week of their companionship. Cookies, grasshoppers, boiled potatoes and peanuts, were alike left untouched in her box. As soon as he could get a chance, he intended to go over to see Stub Blungy and ask him what was good for snakes. Stub had once brought up a young owl, until it died, and he almost always had rabbits, or mice, or some kind of animal.

Again Edgar became conscious of the continuous talking in the parlor. Miss Armstrong's voice was up once more, and now grandma's voice had lost its hint of weariness and she was purring under a string of compliments launched at his devoted head.

"Where *is* the dear child? I do so want to tell him how *sweet* he looked when he spoke that piece to the Fourth of July doin's in the church! What was it, now? Oh, yes! 'Bing 'Em On the Rind!' I remember just as well as can be, although, to tell the truth, it don't seem like much of a title for a war piece, not to my mind! Sounds more comic to me!"

Edgar snorted with such forceful contempt that Clarissa fell from his knee. That was the way with women! They never got anything right! Miss Armstrong was thinking of how *"sweet"* he had looked and not at all of the stirring swing and heart-moving sentiment of "Bingen On the Rhine." His thoughts rambled through the pleasant regions of revenge and he was on board a low, black, rakish craft in the Spanish Main, ordering Miss Armstrong to walk the plank, when his grandmother's voice sent ship and fellow pirates whirling off in a typhoon of panic.

"If you insist, Miss Armstrong I'll have Edgar come in to see you. I think I heard him out on the south porch a short time ago."

Grandmother Raleigh stepped with remarkable briskness for a woman of her years. She was already in the dining-room. In another moment she would be at the porch door. Edgar tore open a button of his waist, thrust Clarissa into his bosom, and pulled his four-in-hand tie over the opening. He was standing up with his hands plunged in his pockets and his gaze on the shambling form of Pete Abare when his grandmother appeared at the door.

"Edgar, come into the parlor; Miss Armstrong wants to see you," she said, and added, with a note of sympathy in her voice, "she will keep you but a minute."

"Yes, ma'am," replied Edgar. He scuffled his feet in the hope that his grandmother would start back and give him a few seconds of grace. Instead, she held the screen door open.

"Come along, Edgar, like a good boy!"

"Yes, ma'am." He plunged through the door and a moment later entered the parlor ahead of Grandmother Raleigh, squirming inwardly at the touch of her hand on his shoulder. He almost prayed that she would not put her arm around him, as she sometimes did.

"Well! Well! Well! He comes right in when his grandma calls him, like a nice boy! And what an affectionate face he has!" The visitor wagged her head with its curious structure of hair that sometimes was slightly gray and sometimes was not, and Edgar felt as he did at the circus when he had mixed too many popcorn balls with too much taffy.

Miss Armstrong held her hands out as though he were a pet dog. Edgar felt a movement in his bosom that thrilled him with dread and he tried to draw back, but an admonitory pat from his grandmother sent him forward. He was between her and the caller, and there was no escape. He felt another wriggle inside his waist and grew dizzy as Miss Armstrong began to stroke his shoulders.

"Won't the little man give me a nice kiss right on the mouth—ow! Ow-o-o-o-o-o-o!"

Miss Armstrong flung herself back in her chair and grasped her lean cheeks in her leaner hands, while her eyes looked as though they might pop into her lap. Clarissa, perhaps jealous of other feminine attentions, had come out to see about it. She peeked around Edgar's necktie, and her flat head waved angrily at the end of three inches of brilliantly striped neck.

Edgar made a lightning movement with his hand and Clarissa disappeared as his grandmother hurried to the side of her guest.

"Mercy me!" she cried. "What *is* the matter?"

The thump of Uncle Nathaniel's cane sounded on the stairs. Miss Armstrong's eyelids fluttered down and her body became limp. She dropped her hands and composed them gracefully in her lap.

"She's fainted! Edgar! Nathaniel! Get a glass of water, quick."

Uncle Nathaniel stopped in the doorway from the hall into the parlor, took in the situation and wheeled with a grunt. As he marched toward the kitchen to get the water, Mrs. Raleigh hurried upstairs for the camphor.

Edgar was unacquainted with fainting spells, but he saw his opportunity and had taken a soft step backward toward the door into the dining-room when one of Miss Armstrong's eyelids lifted halfway.

"Stop right there, you miserable little brat!" she ordered. "I'm going to get to the bottom of this!"

Edgar stopped, motionless from astonishment. He had felt a little bit sorry for Miss Armstrong when he saw her with her eyes closed, but now a devilish inspiration seized him. His chance to escape, the safety of Clarissa, the reward here and hereafter of bad boys—all became as nothing before an overpowering desire to get even for that *"sweet"* and "Bing 'Em On the Rind."

He thrust his head forward like Old Chief Thunder Mountain on the trail of the hated paleface as he tiptoed toward the reclining form of his enemy. Her eyes popped wide open and she drew back. He suddenly swept his necktie aside and stirred up Clarissa with one and the same movement. Clarissa reached half her length toward Miss Armstrong and ran out her forked tongue with an angry hiss not a foot from that lady's prominent nose.

Miss Armstrong leaped backward—straight backward, regardless of her chair, which slammed into a corner. She spun around once in the middle of the room while Edgar, scared at his success, jammed Clarissa out of sight. Uncle Nathaniel appeared in the doorway, a glass of water held precisely in his hand.

"Yarp!" cried Miss Armstrong, and

flung herself into his arms. The glass of water struck his white waistcoat at the top and poured down, mostly inside, it seemed, from the rivulets that came out of his trousers' legs. The lady's arms were about his neck. He looked at Edgar over her shoulder with a strangled expression.

Grandma Raleigh came up behind Uncle Nathaniel and suddenly the latter's burden went limp in his arms. He held her up while grandma held the camphor under her nose. Edgar began to back toward the dining-room door.

"Stay right where you are, young man!" thundered his uncle. "There's something behind this, and if I ever saw a guilty-looking boy, you're one!"

Edgar obeyed. A long shudder went through Uncle Nathaniel's burden. He worked his grizzled moustache fiercely and stared straight ahead as he held her stiffly from him.

"She's coming out, thank goodness!" exclaimed grandma. She was and did, with a heave that sent her arms again around her supporter's neck. He helped her to a chair and grandma applied the camphor again. Suddenly she straightened up and pointed a steady finger at Edgar.

"That boy!" she cried, and covered her face with her hands. Uncle Nathaniel, water still oozing down over his shoes, stepped to her side and bent forward, his back to Edgar.

"What did that young rascal do?" he demanded.

"He-ao-o-o-oh!" groaned Miss Armstrong. Grandma leaned over to hear. It was Edgar's chance. With a noiseless bound he was through the dining-room door and an another instant he had reached the south porch. Almost under his hand lay Pete Abare's dinner pail. A glance told him Abare was not in sight. He lifted the cover, stuffed the squirming Clarissa into the pail and was back in the parlor standing exactly where he had stood a moment before, as Uncle Nathaniel and Grandma Raleigh turned from Miss Armstrong's chair.

"Edgar!"

"Yes, sir."

"Come here, sir!"

"Mother, search that boy!"

Grandmother Raleigh drew back and her lips became a firm line.

"Nathaniel," she said, "if that boy is full of snakes, as Miss Armstrong *says* he is, I wouldn't touch him for the best farm in this county!"

"Then I will!"

Uncle Nathaniel grasped Edgar awkwardly, but firmly, by the arm. He passed a searching hand over the outer surface of the waist that had lately been the abiding-place of Clarissa, discovered two empty buttonholes and probed inside. Then, taking Edgar's head in the crook of his arm, he went through the three pockets of his trousers. The box of angleworms and flies intended for Clarissa, a marble, a knife, two coils of strong cord and a handkerchief, were his reward. He straightened up and looked severely at Miss Armstrong.

"It wouldn't do any harm for you to see Doctor Bingham about your nerves!" he said.

Miss Armstrong rose up in wrath. "Nate Raleigh, it's a pretty note if you can't take my word before the word of that pesky youngun!"

"He searched the boy himself, and you saw him do it," put in grandma, quietly. "I don't think we'd better say anything more about it!"

"All right, then! *I'll* say good-by!"

Miss Armstrong bowed first to Grandma Raleigh and then to Uncle Nathaniel and flounced out of the room. The front door slammed behind her. Edgar's elders looked at each other expressively.

"It's a good thing you never married that girl!" exclaimed grandma.

"Girl!" snorted Uncle Nathaniel. "Old maid!"

He turned on his heel. Edgar, breathing easily for the first time since he had

been called from communion with Clarissa on the south porch, began to gather up the treasures rifled from his pockets.

Abruptly there came the sound of heavy but hasting footsteps in the front hall. Edgar looked up. Katie, big, bony and red-faced, was standing in the doorway with the same look she had worn the day Stub Blungy stole her hot mince pies.

"Missus Raleigh, ma'am," sputtered Katie, tumbling her words out, "I'd like me wages, if you please, ma'am. Ye've been good to me, ma'am, but I'll not be stayin' in a place where Frinchmen has deliryum tremens in the dooryard!"

"Katie!" Uncle Nathaniel roared and Katie jumped, but she stood her ground.

"Yes, sir, an' I've told Missus Raleigh more than once no good would come of havin' that Abare on the place out of pity, wid his dinner pail where he runs for a drink every ten minutes! An' now look at 'im!"

"Katie, who do you mean?" Grandma Raleigh cried. Edgar made a tentative movement toward flight, but a glance from Uncle Nathaniel glued his feet to the carpet.

"I mean what I says, ma'am!" stoutly. "The Frinchman is a-havin' deliryum tremens by the south porch! He's a-seein' shnakes!"

"Katie, I think you've been seeing things yourself!" Uncle Nathaniel looked at her suspiciously.

"That I did, sir! I saw the shnake meself when he was havin' 'em, an' ye kin do the same!"

"What are you telling us, Katie Donohue?" from grandma.

"It's the livin' truth, so help me! The shnake was a-wagglin' at him out of his dinner pail an' he was prayin' to it—the heathen!"

Edgar felt the eyes of his uncle turned in his direction and he looked at the floor. What might have happened he never knew, for at that moment there was a shuffling in the dining-room and Pete Abare, bleary-eyed and swaying, his dinner pail in his hand, stood in the door. There was a shriek from Katie's end of the room.

"There he is wid his pail full of shnakes—the nerve of him! Comin' in here like that! Drive him out, Mister Raleigh!"

"Abare, what's the meaning of this?" demanded Uncle Nathaniel.

"'Scuse me, Mis' Raleigh an' Mister Raleigh," rather thickly, with an attempt at a bow. "You talk to me 'bout pledge five or nine time, Mis' Raleigh, an' not drink no more. Dat pledge, I take heem now!"

"Abare," said Uncle Nathaniel, sharply, "have you been having delirium tremens in the yard?"

"No, sare," very humbly, "I have heem in my dinner pail. You make dat pledge strong, Mis' Raleigh?"

"Let me see your pail!" Uncle Nathaniel looked it over, inside and out.

"Dey ain't real snake, Mister Raleigh," said the victim. "My brudder, he have same t'ing only elephants an' camels. He shoot at one an' bus' up de winder!"

"Huh!" grunted Uncle Nathaniel, handing back the pail. "Wait on the porch, Abare. Katie, are you satisfied now?"

"I will be when the Frinchman puts his name to the pledge!"

"I take heem," promised Abare firmly, as he turned to go. Katie clumped down the hall and the family was alone. Edgar shifted from one foot to the other.

"Young man," growled Uncle Nathaniel, "what do you know about this debacle?"

Edgar turned his clear blue eyes on his grandmother. He knew she was waiting anxiously to hear what he would say, for he had been brought up to speak the truth and shame the devil. He looked his uncle squarely in the face.

"Nothing, sir," he said, meekly. Which was the truth. He didn't know what debacle meant.

THE CARBON COPY

By ARTHUR LEEDS

"NO, Carson—for God's sake—not yet! Not till I've told you something! It means the chair for you. I tell you, man, you're as good as sentenced for my murder the moment you press that trigger!"

Stillman's voice rose in a shrieking crescendo as he fairly vomited his frantic appeal for mercy.

Carson's reply was to spring backward and touch the wall-button that extinguished the overhead light which flooded the office. Still keeping the other covered with the automatic gripped in his right hand, he turned the shade of the desk-lamp so that its rays fell squarely upon his cringing enemy.

"That's exactly the way I've always planned to have you die! I could have shot you down a score of times, but I didn't want to do it when you didn't know it was coming. Now, I'm here—in your own office—and death lies in my right hand! You know it's there, and you know it's coming! Look at me! I want to look right into your eyes as this bullet tears through your brain—"

"Carson, please listen! I didn't—"

"I don't care what you didn't do; I remember only what you *did!* Well, she's dead—and you're about to die. It was all too long ago for anyone to connect me with your death now. And we—her daughter and I—are too far away to be troubled by anything that may happen here to-night. When I take the boat to-morrow to go back to my little girl and my work, this will all seem like a bad dream, that's all."

There was not a tremor of his hand as he raised the automatic. The other man felt rather than saw the movement that was to drop the curtain on his unwholesome career. He braced himself for a final, desperate appeal. His right hand went up to his inner breast-pocket.

"Carson—read this—take it and read it, and then—"

"So that's where you carry it! Well, you'll never pull that on me!"

A red spurt of flame out of the darkness and an ear-splitting roar reverberated through the office and the adjoining room. Stillman's right hand, holding an envelope, was jerked from inside his coat. The hand waved up and down for a moment as one waves farewell from the deck of a departing ship. Then Stillman dropped to his knees and rolled gently over, lying in a curled-up heap on the rug beside the desk.

Carson bent over the dead man and snatched the envelope from the clutching hand. It contained a thin sheet of paper—plainly the carbon copy of a typed sheet—and it read thus:

"To Police Commissioner Hendry.

Sir:

The writer, James Foster Stillman, has one enemy who hates him enough to wish to take his life. He has good reason to believe that that enemy—whose name, together with information regarding the position he now holds in the South American business world, will be found in the enclosed envelope—will attempt to kill him some time during the next two weeks. Accompanying this man's name and address will be found an outline of the circumstances which, the writer believes, will cause his enemy to attempt his life, from motives of revenge. It is earnestly requested that the enclosed letter shall not be opened unless the death of the writer is brought about in such a manner as to point indisputably to murder.

JAMES F. STILLMAN."

MEOWS FROM THE MOVIES

By ALICE GLENISTER

"The White Moll," a story of the underworld, by Frank L. Packard, author of "The Miracle Man," is Pearl White's first picture for William Fox. Richard Travers is her leading man. Miss White will certainly score a big success.

Richard Travers needs a boost. Formerly an Essanay star, he fought in France so hard that they made him a captain. Richard says he has come back to fight his way to the top in pictures. The odds are with him.

We asked Edward Earle, featured in the Charles Miller production "The Law of the Yukon," if he enjoyed his Canadian location trip. Edward jerked his pipe out of his mouth and glared at us. "At twenty below zero?" Meow!

"After Thirty," two-reel comedies by Julian Street and directed by Mrs. Sidney Drew, will have a wide appeal. "Before" as well as "after-thirty" folks enjoy a big laugh.

"The Law Bringers," a story of the big Northwest, produced by Myron Selznick, will have Ralph Ince as the star. Mr. Ince was the original Abraham Lincoln of the screen long before he became a director. The picture is a big one.

"Behind the Door," by Gouverneur Morris, produced by Thomas Ince, gives us Hobart Bosworth's best work. He is a taxidermist and "skins 'em alive." The story is harrowing in parts, but the finished acting of Bosworth makes it the finest picture we have viewed this year.

From "The Woman Thou Gavest Me," "The Woman God Forgot," "The Wife Whom God Forgot" and "The Woman God Sent," it would seem God has been blamed for wishing a good many forsaken and forlorn women on to the film market. Meow!

What do they mean, "The Six Best Cellars?" There ain't no such place since the sixteenth of January, but Bryant Washburn's Paramount picture will tell us what it is all about. We like Bryant: one reason—he has two fine kiddies and loves 'em.

Douglas MacLean and Doris May have "Mary's Ankle" for their next comedy vehicle for Paramount. Doris and Douglas have been doing some excellent comedy work.

"Sooner or Later" has at last been decided upon as the title of Owen Moore's second Selznick picture. First, it was "The Plans of Men," then "The Woman Hater" and "Who's Who." Yet 'tis said only women are changeable.

Speaking of Owen, we'll say he must find "Love Among the Chickens" pretty nice work. But Owen always did rest on "flowery beds of ease." Isn't he Mary Pickford's husband? What Moore could ask more? Meow!

Exquisite Marion Davies has at last found a real live director, as her work in her new big hit, "The Cinema Murder," plainly shows.

Georges Clemenceau's only photoplay is finished. "The Strongest" has for its main question, "Does the soul of woman rule the world to-day?" William Fox is the producer.

Shirley Mason does some exceptional bareback riding in "Her Elephant Man," her first picture for Fox, and the rôle suits this petite artist admirably.

"New York, the melting-pot of the world—boiling and seething by night and by day, purifying the gold and destroying the dross," are the opening lines to "On with the Dance," Mae Murray's Artcraft picture. Mae does some pretty bits of dancing in this picture which reminds us of her Follies days.

"What Would You Do?" is the title of the latest picture in which that clever girl, Madeline Traverse, appears. We don't know what we would do, Madeline, but we like your work.

Word has come to us from the coast that Marguerite De La Motte was seriously injured in a crash between her motor and a trolley. We are sorry to hear of this as Marguerite is a great favorite of ours. Where, oh where, did that motor-cop go? One of the two must have been speeding.

Once more Gloria Swanson takes her pen in hand to sign the marriage promise to obey. This time it is Herbert Somborn. We'll say there are som(e) born to luck. Her next picture, with Cecil De Mille directing, will be "Don't Change Your Wife." We could suggest to Gloria the reverse, especially since her new husband is a millionaire.

"Jiggs," "Maggie Jiggs" and "Miss Jiggs," of MacManus's "Bringing Up Father" cartoons, are going to jump from newsprint to celluloid in a series of comedies to be directed by Al Christie. Johnny Ray, an Irish comedian of vaudeville fame, will have the part of "Jiggs."

"Fatty" Arbuckle will desert his beloved derby, commodious trousers and slap-stick *pro tem* to assume the part of the sheriff in the Paramount production of the "Round Up." "Fatty," we will say, is round up and all around. Meow!

Hal Roach has formed a beauty trust, he writes us, and cornered the market for beautiful girls for his Harold Lloyd comedies. "They are all hand-picked," he writes, "and selected with my well-trained eye for, well, beauty."

Chester Conklin, in William Fox's Sunshine Comedies, is gathering a following among the fans that is going to run another famous C. C. a close second, if Chester sticks to the clever work he has been doing lately.

The South is well represented among star motion-picture actresses, to wit: Mary Miles Minter, Louisiana, Lois Wilson, Alabama; Fritzi Brunette, Georgia; Kathleen Clifford and Elinor Fair, Virginia; Dorothy Phillips, Maryland, and Jane Novak, Missouri.

Dustin ("Dusty") Farnum comes back to us in "The Corsican Brothers," a screen version of Alexander Dumas's famous novel. Absence makes us fonder of Dustin.

"See American Thirst," in the title of Cissy Fitzgerald's two-reel comedy. It's no comedy, Cissy, but a real tragedy.

Buck Jones is the wildest and luckiest cowpuncher who ever dallied before the camera, if he lives through many more of the stunts we saw him doing for his first William Fox production, "The Sharp-Shooter."

We once asked Viola Dana what her favorite indoor sport was when she was not working in pictures, to which the little Metro star replied: "A head massage, a manicure, a backrub, a nice warm bath, my supper and to bed." With these done she says, "I say good-night."

Once May Allison had a part in a comic opera, called "The Life of Moses." "I was one of his wives," said the Metro star. "Which one?" we inquired. "I've forgotten," replied May, "but we'll call her Mrs. Moses." There are a lot of them in New York, May.

Little Johnny Jones was well chosen to portray "Edgar" in the Booth Tarkington photoplays for Goldwyn. Johnny is not "the worst boy in town, nor the best," but he surely is "good" in these pictures.

We liked D. W. Griffith's "Birth of a Nation" and "Intolerance" and "Hearts of the World," but "Broken Blossoms" and "The Greatest Question," although wonderfully and beautifully produced, are too morbid and harrowing. After four years of lurid and frightful melodrama, don't we need a cheerful uplifting, as it were?

Jack Sherrill, the athletic juvenile, is costarring with Ruth Clifford in a new serial made by the Frohman Amusement Company. Sidney Bracy and Corene Uzzell are in the cast. Four trumps.

"The Dancing Fool" is Wallace Reid's new picture. "Wally" is good, as usual, and with his leading lady, Ann Little, some excellent team-work is done.

Priscilla Dean, Universal star, is a "Beautiful Beggar" in her latest picture. Wallace Beery said, "This is the life; nothing to do but lounge on silken cushions, smoke water pipes and be caressed by beautiful wives of my harem." Pretty soft, Wallace. Meow!

$5,000.00
IN CASH PRIZES
for Original Short Stories of Present-Day Life for Publication in
The Black Cat

The Prizes Are:

1st Prize	- - - - - - -	$2,000
2nd "	- - - - - - -	1,200
3rd "	- - - - - - -	700
4th "	- - - - - - -	500
5th "	- - - - - - -	300
6th "	- - - - - - -	200
7th "	- - - - - - -	100

THE prize winning stories will be stories of plot, of action, of interesting complication —stories that are meaty and fast-moving, yet both real and reasonable. Spend the sweat of your brow on deeds, not on acute character analysis; on big situations, on suspense and appeal, not on tedious description and fine writing.

The check pulling stories will be the stories of BIG IDEAS, LOGICALLY and POWERFULLY developed.

Write about present-day life, and avoid the morbid, gruesome, supernatural and unpleasantly tragic. No dialect stories will be considered.

Conditions

1. Each manuscript must bear at the top of the first page the writer's real name and address, in full; also the number of words in the story, which may range from 1,500 to 6,000. Do not exceed the latter number.

2. Each manuscript must be typewritten on standard size paper (8½ x 11 inches); must be sent flat or folded, but ***not rolled,*** postage or express charges fully prepaid, and accompanied by stamped addressed envelope for return. Letters concerning stories submitted must be enclosed with manuscripts—not sent under separate cover. Manuscripts will be received and returned only at the writer's risk.

3. Every manuscript will be judged purely on story-value, on its interest in plot and action;

and the name or reputation of a writer will carry no weight whatsoever.

4. All envelopes containing manuscripts should be plainly marked "Prize Contest" and addressed "The Black Cat Magazine, Inc., 229 West 28th St., New York, N. Y." Their receipt will be acknowledged. Any competitor may send as many stories as he pleases, but in each case he must comply with all the above conditions.

5. Failure of any manuscript to fulfill all the above requirements will automatically eliminate it.

6. The competition will close June 30, 1920, and within sixty days of that date the awards will be announced in THE BLACK CAT and paid in cash. All stories submitted in the competition that are found to be acceptable for publication in THE BLACK CAT will be paid for at regular rates. Publication of these stories will begin as soon as possible, and all stories thus accepted will be published with the statement "Entered in THE BLACK CAT Prize Story Con-